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ABSTRACT

This pack of materials is a tool to help older people who have had few or negative past learning experiences begin to value themselves and what they have to offer. The activities, aimed at promoting confidence, participation, new interests, and friendships, are intended for self-organized groups with no professional experience--part of Better Government or Older and Bolder networks, Age Concern, trade unions, action groups, sheltered accommodation, and community centers. The pack is divided into self-contained topic areas, each of which offers a range of materials that includes warm-ups, activities, and extracts and some ideas about how they might be used. The 11 chapters address the following topic areas: running a group; listening skills; myths about aging; skills for growing bolder; better government for older people; services and information; raising the issues; health; creative writing; reading for pleasure; and reminiscence. Appendixes include a list of 47 addresses of useful organizations and a list of nine European contacts on education and aging. (YLB)

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OLDER AND BOLDER

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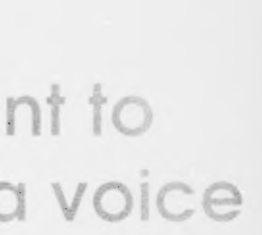

Materials for people who want to become more involved, have a voice and go on learning.

Katherine Hughes
with: Anne James, Alison Soskice, Emma Howell, Anne Ambler

Designed by Jackie Cameron

£10

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The production of

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MESSAGE FROM JACK JONES
PRESIDENT
TRANSPORT & GENERAL WORKERS' UNION RETIRED MEMBERS' ASSOCIATION

The phrase 'social exclusion' is used glibly too often by some people who do not understand the depth of age problems.

Not enough has been done to ensure the greater participation of older people in society, and programmes of this kind are badly needed to help in making the change.

It is a pleasure for me to commend the scheme - designed as it is to make the older 'BOLDER'!

I congratulate all concerned. The government clearly wants to see progress in its policy of Better Government for Older People and here is a splendid response.

I am sure that those who come together in the groups being arranged, will gain knowledge and experience but above all confidence in participation - so badly needed when the older generation has been ignored for so long.

Jack Jones

Older and Bolder has been edited, written or re-written by Katherine Hughes with Anne James, Alison Soskice, Emma Howell and Anne Ambler. It has been designed and produced by Jackie Cameron.

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Older and Bolder is a second edition of an earlier publication entitled *It's Never Too Late to Learn!* by Katherine Hughes with Alison Soskice, Debbie McIlveen, Liz Moore, Ruskin Agewell Group and Bullingdon Community Centre.

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Older & Bolder / Age Concern Oxfordshire

Photo by Mary Daniel, Director, Age Concern Oxfordshire

OLDER AND BOLDER

Forward by Jim Soulsby, Development Officer, Older & Bolder Programme, NIACE

I feel immensely privileged in being asked to write the forward to *Older and Bolder*, in effect the off-spring of *It's Never Too Late*: a learning pack for older people with few or no formal qualifications.

Older and Bolder is a term which once you hear it you with you had thought of it. I have heard of its use in New Zealand in the 1980s. Astra Blaug, the feminist poet, used it as the title of her anthology in 1990:

"Nothing to lose
bolder and bolder
as I get older
I'll do as I choose
What's there to lose?"

It is also the title of the programme at NIACE, the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education, of which I am a part, promoting learning opportunities for older people.

Older and Bolder has such affirming, positive resonance. So often when we use the terms older, old and ageing, we get negative, diminishing connotations. Yet "growing older", "Older and Bolder" assert clearly that it is "Never too late to learn".

In a society with so many more older people now and in the future, both numerically and proportionally, but with evidence that shows their disengagement and exclusion from so much of society - paid work, family and community - it is crucial that ways and means are found to be inclusive. To offer through learning opportunities - greater fulfilment, a sense of achievement, well-being and meaningful engagement. Lifelong learning, later lifelong learning is the key that unlocks opportunities for volunteering, mentoring, further study, enhanced family and community life and understanding, more and different employment opportunities.

Experience is showing that embracing these principles is not sufficient, neither is imposing patterns of learning and curriculum which we feel is relevant.

The starting point has to be where people are at, and to build up - individually and collectively - from there. So much of what we offer lacks this relevance.

But this pack is very relevant. It is a very effective tool to helping older people, with little or negative past learning experiences, to begin to value themselves and what they have to offer. And most importantly such older people wrote it, which to my mind enhances its value to other older people with similar experiences and diffidence.

So whilst I preach the virtues of later life learning, here is a group of people who are doing it and I am delighted to be associated with them and to be able to promote their achievements.

May 1999

INTRODUCTION

There have never been more older people in western society than today. There has also never been such growing insistence that negative assumptions about ageing should be challenged. Older people are demanding full citizenship rights. That means being 'participants - not recipients'.

The Better Government initiative was launched by a Labour Government in July 1998. Its aim is to involve older people in decision-making and prioritising areas for policy and action.

Better Government has provided substantial resources to prepare and print this publication which is to be launched at its first national conference in July 1999 at Ruskin College.

The National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) has generously given permission for our title, 'Older and Bolder' which we think encapsulates the spirit of learning and participation at the turn of the century. Jim Soulsby of NIACE's Older and Bolder campaign has also kindly contributed a forward to this publication.

This Pack derives from an earlier one entitled 'It's Never Too Late to Learn' (1993). It is interesting how dated the title now sounds! 'It's Never Too Late to Learn' was funded by Charity Projects and grew out of the educational and political activities of the Ruskin College Agewell Group, working with the Wood Farm Community Centre.

WHO IS THE PACK FOR?

Included in this pack is a range of material aimed at promoting confidence, participation, new interests and friendships. Activities are pitched at self-organised groups with no professional experience. These groups might be part of Better Government or Older and Bolder networks, Age Concern, Trade Unions, action groups, sheltered accommodation, community centres - anywhere, in fact, where people want to come together, to develop their ideas, confidence and involvement.

HOW TO USE THE PACK

The pack is divided into self-contained topic areas. Each topic area offers a range of material that includes **Warm-Ups, Activities,** and **Extracts**, and some ideas about how they might be used. There is no particular order in which you should approach the topic areas. This will be up to you and your group, as will how much or how little you use the material on offer within each topic area.

1

RUNNING A GROUP

INTRODUCTION

Groups can come together in a variety of ways. Some can be quite informal, made up of friends and acquaintances who want to share activities together. Others can grow out of already existing organisations or larger groups. Some can be more formally organised, for instance by an adult education centre, family centre or community centre.

It is useful to have an idea about how groups form and what you can do to ensure that they work well. This section introduces you to ideas and suggestions along these lines.

WHAT IS A GROUP?

Groups come in all shapes and sizes but essentially they have a shared purpose and usually an agreed means of achieving it. Of course there is often disagreement so groups usually develop formal and informal 'rules' about running themselves and making decisions.

Learning groups are best kept quite small but not too small. You need enough people to get a good discussion going, but not so many that the group is difficult to manage and people don't get much chance to speak. Between six to twelve is probably a good size.

GETTING A GROUP TOGETHER

This might involve putting a suggestion to a meeting of your organisation, putting a poster up at the local community centre, advertising in a free newspaper, *What's On?* page or on local radio, or starting with a small group of friends. It would be useful to get help from a local community education tutor, recreation department officer, family centre worker or the social services department.

ROLE OF GROUP LEADER

The pack has been written for non-professionals who want to learn and become more active in the community. There is no expectation that group leaders will have any special knowledge. What they need to be prepared to do is help to organise the group and work through some of the materials with participants. The group itself will therefore need to take a lot of responsibility for making the sessions work well. This needs to be made clear in the publicity and in the first session.

Running a Group

Group leaders are:

- willing to co-ordinate the group
- willing to lead a programme put together by the group
- likely to delegate tasks to group members, e.g. booking speakers, finding out information, chairing sessions

Group leaders are not:

- experts
- professionals
- different from members of the group
- responsible for making everything go well

1 SOME PRE-COURSE CONSIDERATIONS

Time and place

Think carefully about which time of day you should hold the group. Older people are often unhappy about evening meetings, so day-time is probably better. If people are likely to come on the bus consider when bus passes are in operation.

Consider the best day of the week. Choose a day that does not clash with other activities such as clubs or the market.

Select the venue carefully. It may be possible to hold your group in a centre the participants already use. A family centre, community centre of local school might be ideal. Many older people find lack of transport a serious problem, so local venues are probably better.

Arrangements

Choose a room for the group that is easily accessible, with preferably no stairs and wheelchair access, and which is warm and as attractive as possible. You will probably want tea/coffee making facilities so that you can have a break or start the session with a drink.

You will need comfortable chairs - possibly of different designs to meet a range of needs. You will probably want tables for some of the activities. Make sure you also have something to collect your ideas on,

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for instance a flip-chart, a portable whiteboard or even large sheets of paper (e.g. plain wallpaper) that can be stuck to the wall.

Make a list of the requirements that your group will have and use this when making decisions about premises.

Forming goals

Before you get your group together you need to have a clear idea about what your goals are. For instance, what are you wanting to achieve, what do you hope you and others will get out of it? You will need to talk to people about this, such as those you are consulting for support, and the members of the group you plan to work with, if they are already established as a group.

You may, for instance, produce a list like the following.

We would like to:

Share and exchange ideas in a friendly and tolerant setting

Try out new activities

Become more confident and vocal in the community

Participate fully in deciding what to include in a programme

Participate fully in group sessions

Become more supportive of each other

Have fun

Make new friends

When you have decided on your goals you are in a better position to decide you to achieve them. Your ideas might include:

- devising ways in which all the group members will become involved in activities, e.g. through working in small groups or pairs, taking turns in offering ideas or experiences
- ensuring that there is plenty of time for members of the group to chat informally to each other and meet new people - perhaps while having tea
- sharing thoughts about the goals for the group and collecting people's ideas
- helping the group to shape some guidelines for the way in which sessions will be conducted.

2 THINKING ABOUT LEARNING METHODS

There are many different methods that your group can use in order to get the best out of the materials. Some members of the group might be unfamiliar with them, so it would be worth talking about these different ideas with them.

Some people think of learning in the formal sense of what they did at school. Others may well be acquainted with listening to speakers and perhaps asking questions, but not with getting more fully involved.

Adult learning best takes place when:

- people study and discuss what they are interested in
- group members are relaxed and supportive of each other
- people participate fully in the group
- people learn to listen to each other and hear about each other's different ideas and experiences

You might like to highlight these issues with your group using the sheet *What Learning is About* (p.11).

Different methods

Alternative methods that a group could use include:

☐ agreeing to sit in different seats each week so people get to know each other

☐ discussing issues in pairs or small groups and then feeding ideas back to the larger group

☐ doing some activities individually and then discussing in a pair

☐ inviting a speaker and discussing what you are going to ask them before they come

☐ letting one of the group introduce a topic followed by questions and a discussion

☐ each person having a two minute 'say' about something

☐ watching a video with some questions in mind to discuss afterwards (someone needs to watch it first and suggest some questions)

☐ acting out situations as if they were for real (role play), e.g. what you want to say at a meeting

3 THE ROLE OF THE GROUP LEADER

Your role as group leader is:

- to co-ordinate activities
- to make sure that the ground-rules are reasonably observed
- to keep people on the subject
- to keep an eye on the time
- to plan the sessions - but delegate as much as possible

You should probably try to avoid:

- doing too much of the talking
- feeling you have to be very knowledgeable about something
- commenting very much on other people's views
- feeling that you have to have all the answers

4 DURING THE COURSE

The first session
First sessions of groups are always the hardest. Participants feel nervous and so do group leaders.

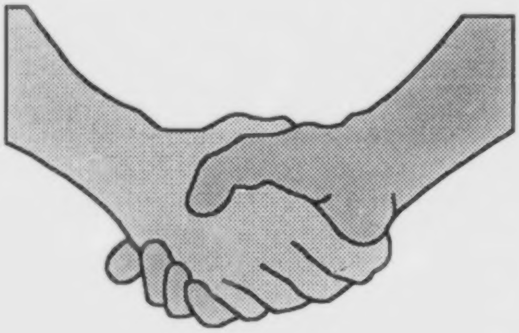
It is important to be welcoming when people arrive especially if people do not know each other well. Greet each person when they come in, introduce yourself, show them where to go and find someone for them to talk to. Tea or coffee is often a good ice-breaker.

Use the first session to get to know each other better, to develop group guidelines and to plan a programme that everyone is happy with.

Running a Group

Introductions

Make sure people have introduced themselves to each other and have begun to get to know each other's names. Sometimes groups like to wear sticky labels with their names on.



Check practical arrangements such as where the lavatories are what time you want to have a break, who is being picked up after the session, etc.

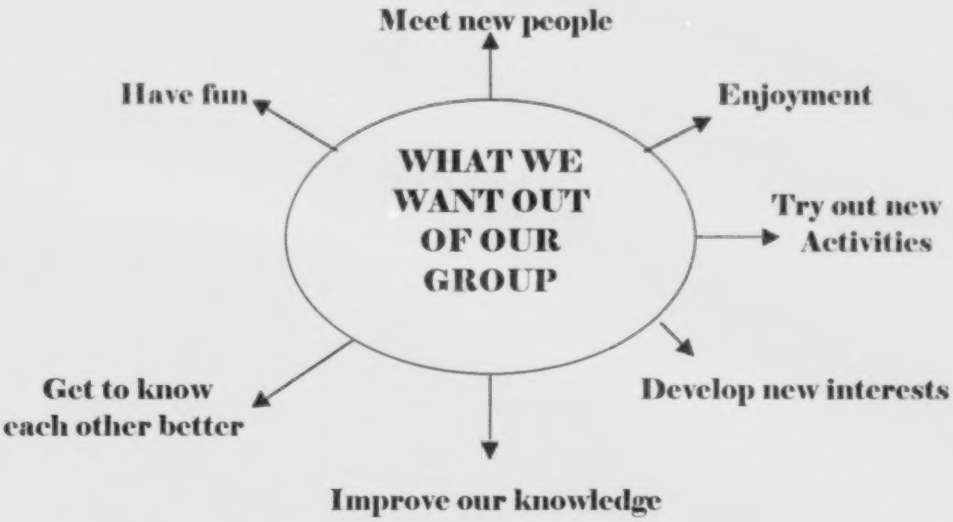
Warming up

An old favourite is to ask people to talk to one other person whom them don't know. Let them have ten minutes for talking and then ask them to introduce each other saying only one or two (approved!) things about the other person.

Group goals

Discuss with members of the group what they would like to get out of their time together. You could, for instance, ask each in turn to briefly give their views. Or you could begin by telling them what your aims have been in setting up the group and using this as a basis for discussion.

You might like to present your collective ideas like this:


Meet new people
Have fun
Enjoyment
WHAT WE WANT OUT OF OUR GROUP
Try out new Activities
Get to know each other better
Develop new interests
Improve our knowledge

Developing guidelines for discussion

It is very useful to develop group guidelines. It means that the whole group has decided how it wants to run and it makes your task as co-ordinator much easier. Any 'difficult customers' can be reminded by the group that there are rules that they should stick to.

Explain to the group what you want them to do and why. Offer them the **Model Guidelines**. Then ask them in pairs to think of the sorts of points they would like to include in their own. Write these on a board and discuss which to keep or reject.

Model Guidelines

These guidelines are to give you some ideas when you are devising your own. It is very important for groups to have guidelines as it makes sessions run much more smoothly and allows everyone to feel more involved.

- Try to be punctual. The group will start on time - but it doesn't matter if you are late.
- Don't talk for too long. Make sure everyone gets a chance.
- Welcome anyone who is new.
- Listen when someone is talking.
- Address your comments to the whole group, not just the co-ordinator.
- Be tolerant of different views.
- Try and make sure everyone feels included.
- Know that what you say will be listened to in confidence.
- Avoid language that offends, e.g. swearing, racist language, sexisms, ageisms, etc.
- Feel free to say what you think about the sessions and suggest new ideas.
- Support the co-ordinator by sticking to the guidelines and taking responsibility for the programme.

Make sure someone copies these ideas down for photocopying. Alternatively ask everyone to copy them down.

Running a Group

Putting a programme together
Introduce the pack and its contents. Give the group some idea of the sorts of things that could be covered. You will need to decide what to cover in the next two or three sessions but it may be possible to leave decisions about further weeks for later. Consider if there is anything you could all do/find out in between sessions.

As far as possible the Warm-Ups, Activities and Extracts have been arranged so that they can be photocopied as separate sheets which people write on and take home if they wish. At the end of each session decide what material will need to be photocopied for the next session and who will be responsible for this. You may need to make a small charge for photocopying expenses, either per session or at the start of the course.

Ideally each participant should have a copy of this book, but where this is not possible you may need to photocopy relevant extracts, and of course it will be harder work for the chairperson!

Get going!
It is a good idea in a first session to actually get on with one of the Activities in the pack. Try one of the Warm-Up ideas.

Finishing
At the end, ask everyone in turn to say how they felt about the first session and what improvements they can suggest.

5 FUTURE SESSIONS

- Suggest that participants sit in different seats.
- Try re-arranging the furniture - some weeks you could sit in a circle, others around separate tables - experiment!
- Encourage people to take responsibility for the group - remind them that it is their group rather than yours. For instance, someone else might book the speaker, buy the milk, type up the programme, send off for information.
- Continue to encourage positive comments about how to improve the sessions.

6 AFTER EACH SESSION

- Congratulate yourself!
- Follow up people who didn't come with a friendly note or phone call - try and delegate this.
- Make an action list of things you will need to do before next time and when you are going to do them.
- Make a list of feedback that other participants will make next time, e.g. from other meetings or activities.

ABOVE ALL, HAVE A GOOD TIME! LEARNING SHOULD BE ENJOYABLE AND REWARDING.

GOOD LUCK

We would love to hear how you get on.

What Learning Is About

- ✓ Being open to new ideas
- ✓ Questioning your old ideas and assumptions
- ✓ Developing new skills
- ✓ Accepting a challenge
- ✓ Giving new activities a chance
- ✓ Being willing to share some of your ideas and experiences with others
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Not giving up if something is difficult
- ✓ Looking for the evidence; being critical; digging below the surface

What Learning Is Not About

- ✗ Being closed to new ideas
- ✗ Doing only the things you have done before
- ✗ Giving up, if it seems difficult
- ✗ Saying "I can't" before you have tried
- ✗ Relying only on personal experience
- ✗ Not listening to others
- ✗ Knowing you are right
- ✗ Believing there is only one view of things
- ✗ Not being willing to listen and discuss

2

LISTENING SKILLS

This section is designed to increase awareness of the difference good listening skills can make to our relationships with others and to recognise what those skills are.

Listening to and being listened to by other people are one of the ways in which we build and maintain relationships throughout our lives.

We usually just take listening for granted and don't think of it as a skill. This is probably because like other personal skills it is something most of us just 'pick up' as we go along.

Probably we all listen better at some times than at others - it's hard to give someone else your full attention if you're tired or busy or have something on your mind or don't much like what they're saying.

When a group is learning together it is important that everyone should have their say and be listened to.

Guidance for Group Leaders

PREPARATION

You will need to photocopy enough Activity sheets for each person or at least one between two.

GENERAL GUIDANCE NOTES

The session could take place in two hours if you timed it as suggested in the Activities. Or it could take two sessions, with the second devoted to discussion and the feedback of any real-life examples people have experienced since the first session.

Listening is a good topic to use towards the beginning of a group's life as it gives people the chance to experience what it is like to listen and be listened to and what it is like *not* to listen and be listened to, and how it makes them feel.

The session is planned so that one Activity follows another in a logical way. It would probably be best just to follow the whole session through from beginning to end as it is.

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WARM-UP

If you don't know each other's names, start with some introductions, each person in turn saying their name, a bit about where they come from originally, how they heard about the group and what they are expecting this session to be like.

If you already know each other try a round of each person saying the best and worst thing that happened to them during the week.

Or you can just start by reading the introduction and asking for any comments.

Activities

Activity 1 **How Does It Feel?**

This Activity is designed to make everyone more aware of the skills you use when you are really listening to others and what a difference it can make to how people feel.

- ☐ Get into pairs. Tell each other in turn about a time recently when you felt that the person you were talking to wasn't really listening to you. Don't talk about what you were trying to tell the other person but just remember and describe how it felt **not to be listened to.** *(5 minutes)*
- ☐ Whole group. Check your reactions with the list below. Did any of these match the way you felt? *(10 minutes)*

'I felt like crying.'

'I felt angry.'

'I felt small.'

'I felt stupid.'

'I felt I was boring.'

'I just wanted to go away.'

'I just dried up.'

MOST OF US DON'T LIKE TO FEEL THIS WAY

Activity 2 **They're Not Listening…**

Work as a whole group but first spend a minute or two thinking about your own answers to the following questions.

- How did you know the other person wasn't listening to you?
- What did they look like or do?
- Did any of the following apply?

They didn't look at me.

Their eyes were glazed.

They kept walking about.

They just kept on
(looking at the television …
chopping the cabbage …
reading the paper … etc.)

They were fiddling

They didn't react.

☐ Share your answers in the whole group.

If someone is prepared to volunteer you could list the points as they come up. (*10 minutes*)

Activity 3 **Listening**

Read the whole activity through first and check that you understand what to do before you start.

☐ Get into pairs and do the following listening exercise.

Tell each other what you did before you came here today.

Take it in turns to listen to each other for two minutes each. Listen with your full attention and let the other person know that you are listening to them but don't speak.

☐ Immediately after each of you has had a turn at talking, tell your listener how you felt being listened to compared with the time when you weren't. People might say things like:

'I felt good.'

'I felt interesting.'

'I felt warm and comfortable.'

'I felt it was easy to talk.'

'I felt alright.'

☐ When you have both finished your turns and told each other what it felt like everyone get back together in the whole group.

Briefly share your experiences in the whole group. (*15 minutes*)

Activity 4 Being Listened to...

☐ In the whole group, discuss how you could tell that the other person was listening to you by their behaviour.

You might come up with a list which includes the following:

They looked into my eyes.

They smiled.

They said "uh-huh", or made encouraging noises.

They sat still.

They sat facing me.

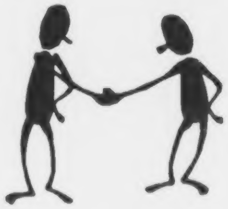
They leaned forward a bit.

They had their arms on their lap and looked relaxed.

They looked as though they were going to stay there.

☐ If you have a volunteer you can list these points too, and pin them up next to the first list for comparison. (*15 minutes*)

TAKE A BREAK



Activity 5 **Feedback**

For the second half of the session you could have a more general discussion using Activity 6, or just use the following questions to prompt discussion amongst you.

❖ **How did you feel about doing these exercises?**

People sometimes feel there is something false about practising something that is assumed to just come naturally, and it's important to accept this feeling.

❖ **Do you ever find it difficult to listen to other people? What makes it difficult?**

❖ **What did you get out of the session which was surprising or interesting or useful?**

❖ **Is there anything you will do or change as a result?**

❖ **How might today's session be useful to us as a group?**

Activity 6 **Agree or Disagree?**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Listening is something we take for granted. It isn't something we learn and there is something false about practising it and thinking of it as a skill.
- ***It is important to take turns listening and talking.***
- Listening and being listened to are one of the ways in which we build and maintain relationships throughout our lives.
- ***Some people are good listeners and some are not.***
- Probably we all listen better at some times than at others - it's hard to give someone else your full attention if you're tired or busy or have something on your mind or don't much like what they're saying.
- ***When a group is learning together it is important that everyone can have their say and be listened to.***

Discuss each of these in turn.

3

MYTHS ABOUT AGEING

This section aims to challenge some of the ideas and myths about ageing that can diminish people's lives. The effect of such ideas can be to make people think they shouldn't be doing certain things at certain ages or can't try new activities. Ageing is as varied an experience as being young and can be very different for different groups. Being older on a low income offers fewer opportunities than being older on a high income, for instance. Ageing in a country different from the one in which you were born may raise special issues. Older people should be seen as individuals deserving of respect and inclusion in society.

Guidance for Group Leaders

WARM-UP

Give the group the sheet entitled *Opinions on Ageing* (p.23). Ask them to put a tick by the statements they agree with and a cross by those they don't. If they have no opinion, leave it blank.

In turn ask people to explain briefly one statement they agreed with and one they disagreed with.

ACTIVITIES AND SUGGESTED SESSION

There are six Activities of varying lengths for use in this session, or they could be used over two sessions if there is a particular interest in this subject.

Activity 1 **Myths About Ageing**

☐ Give out the quiz entitled *Myths About Ageing*

☐ Ask people to individually tick or cross those statements they agree or disagree with. They may prefer to do neither and add a comment instead. Encourage them to discuss the statements with a neighbour but make their own decisions.

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☐ When you have finished this, which might take *thirty minutes*, hand out the *Comments* sheets (pp 25-27). Explain before you do so that the comments are not necessarily 'cut and dried', 'yes' or 'no' type answers. People may not necessarily agree with them or the way they are presented. That is fine. You are looking at complex and controversial issues.

☐ Split the large group into smaller groups. Ask each group to read through the comments together and to note their reactions to them - are they surprised, pleased or interested, or doubtful, sceptical, etc.?

☐ Ask one person from each group to briefly feed back their group's responses to the main group.

TAKE A BREAK?

After the break choose a couple of other Activities to cover. You might try, for instance:

Activity 2	**What's in a Name?**
Activity 3	**Growing Old Away From Your Country of Birth**
Activity 4	**Images of Ageing**
Activity 5	**Caring for the Elderly**
Activity 6	**Poems**

☐ Finish the session by reading out the poem *Warning* (p. 37). Ask for general reactions or use the questions included.

FOLLOW-UP

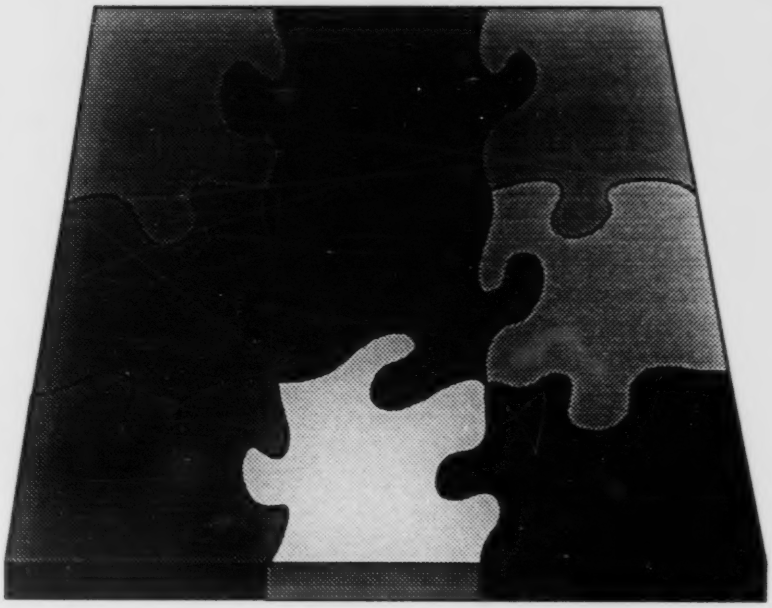
You could give the group one of the Extracts for them to think about during the week for discussion at the next meeting.

Some might like to monitor how older people are presented in the media and describe their findings.

CONCLUSIONS

Ask each person in turn one of the following.

- What is the most surprising thing you have learnt today?
- Which part of the session have you found the most interesting?



Warm-Up

Opinions on ageing: what do *you* think?

You're only as old as you feel

Education is more important as you get older

Being younger has as many problems as being older

You're bound to go downhill as you get older

More older people in the population is a big problem

People want to keep their independence

Chronological age has little to do with how you behave or feel.

Retiring from work is easier for women than for men

You can't make generalisations about older people - they're all different

Retirement is an outdated idea

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Activities

Activity 1 **Myths About Ageing**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1 Getting older means poorer health.

2 Most older people are on a low income.

3 A large number of older people end up in institutional care.

4 Families no longer look after older people like they used to.

5 Retired people do not make much of a contribution to society.

6 Intelligence declines as you get older.

7 Dementia (senility) is common in people over 60.

8 Older people generally enjoy life.

9 Older people are less likely to be victims of crime of violence than any other group.

10 Older people often enjoy an active sex life.

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MYTHS ABOUT AGEING: COMMENT

1 Getting older means poorer health.
This is not entirely so. The majority of older people are well and live reasonably happy lives. In a recent survey (Midwinter 1991) 78 per cent of the interviewees who were aged 55 and over reported being in very good or fairly good health; 75 per cent of interviewees over 75 reported the same. Poor health is not an inevitable prospect of decline as you get older. Good health however is related to income levels with those on higher incomes experiencing better health and living longer. It is sobering to consider that although we live longer we are not necessarily living healthier (*Guardian* 28.1.99)

2 Most older people are on a low income.
Most older people are not on a low income. In 1990 the top 20 per cent of retired households had an average income of £10,000; 85 per cent had an extra income on top of a state pension though often this was very small. The groups that receive the highest income before retirement also receive the highest post-retirement income. (Tinker, 1996) However, many relied solely on a state pension: 30 per cent of people of retirement age had only a state pension. Two million claimed Income Support and one million in addition were entitled but did not claim. Many in this group reported difficulties in paying bills, buying basics, keeping warm in winter.

Your standard of living post-retirement depends very much on your standard of living before retirement. Women, therefore, and particularly working-class women, end up or indeed continue living in poverty.

3 A large number of older people end up in institutional care.
This is not the case. Only about 5 per cent of the retired population live in long-term residential accommodation. Of over 75s, 80 per cent live in the community. Most older people therefore live at home. Of people over 65, 20 per cent of men and 47 per cent of women live alone.

4 Families no longer look after older people like they used to.
Not so. As we have seen, few older people live in long-term institutional care. Most older people who need support get it from their families. This care is vastly most than that which statutory services provide and saves the state a substantial part of the annual carers' "bill" of £34 billion. Around 3.5m women and 2.5m men are carers. (National Association of Carers, 1998)

Compared with the past, there are more older people needing care and relatively fewer young people to look after them. Although people are more likely now to live at a distance from each other, changes in technology such as the telephone and car mean that contacts can be maintained.

The Griffiths Report on Community Care (1989) recommends greater support for carers but this needs financial input.

So families do care for older people but the burdens of doing so can be immense.

5 Retired people do not make much of a contribution to society.

Rubbish! Older people have, of course, already made a major contribution to society through work and caring for family. So perhaps the question we should really ask is - does society contribute adequately to older people's needs?

Many retired people continue to work part-time though one survey (Midwinter, 1991) found that 74 per cent had no desire to continue working.

People aged 65-74 are the group most likely to be involved in voluntary work. Many older people continue to work as carers.

6 Intelligence declines as you get older.

Not so. How intelligent you are depends more on whether you use your mind or not rather than on ageing. Open University students over 60 gain better marks for their essays than do younger students. People's most productive years are often their older years - witness Picasso, Mandela, or Beethoven. Maturity, experience, opportunity are all important aspects affecting intelligence.

It may be that memory deteriorates to some extent. However, when an older person forgets something it is more likely to be put down to ageing than if a younger person does because of the stereotype. Remembering items like telephone numbers is, anyway, not a very good test of mental powers. Adults are more concerned about understanding things than learning by rote.

7 Dementia is common in people over 60.

Not so. The highest published figure is 10 per cent and other research puts the figure even lower (Freer, 1988). There are probably cases of misdiagnosis when people are becoming forgetful or alcoholism becomes a problem.

8 Older people generally enjoy life.

Yes, they do. Minwinter's study (1991) found that 27 per cent enjoy life more and 42 per cent about the same compared with when they were younger. There is, however, a relationship between enjoying life less, your health and being on a low income.

9 Older people are less likely to be victims of crimes of violence than any other group.

This is generally true. Young working-class men are most likely to be victims. However, older people are more fearful of crime. This may be because the media promotes such fears and politicians sometimes play on them. In the age of the motor car, deserted and poorly-lit streets may deter many older people from venturing out in the evenings. Home, however, for many women is a more dangerous place to be (Muncie and McLaughlin, 1995) Property crimes against older people are much more common than crimes of violence.

10 Older people often enjoy an active sex life ... and better!

Why should this not be true? Younger people do not have a monopoly of sexual activity! Stereotypes can get in the way of people enjoying sex in later life. Younger people often do not like the idea of older people having a sex life but that is their problem! Significantly it is a rare book on older people that ever mentions sex and sexuality.

REFERENCES

Professor Anderson (1983), 'Family Life Not So Good in the Old Days After All', *Guardian*, 15 September 1983.

Charles Freer (1988), 'The Ageing Population: Burden?', in Nicholas Wells and Charles Freer, *The Ageing Population: Burden or Challenge?*

Eric Midwinter (1991), *The British Gas Survey on Attitudes to Ageing*

Eric Midwinter (1991), *Age is Opportunity: Education and Older People*, Centre for Policy Studies

John Muncie and Eugene McLaughlin (1996), *The Problem of Crime*, Open University

Chris Phillipson (1982), *Capitalism and the Construction of Old Age*, Macmillan

Alice Tinker (1996), *Older People in Modern Society*, Longmans

Activity 2 What's in a Name?

Society uses various names to denote older people. Which ones do you prefer and why?

SENIOR CITIZENS

MIDDLE AGED

THE OLD

OLD 'UNS

OLD CHAP

ELDERLY

ELDERS

THIRD AGE

GERIATRICS

RETIRED

OLD MAN

OLDER PEOPLE

PENSIONERS

OAPs

... *NONE OF THESE*

ANOTHER APPROACH TO NAMING

Increasingly people are using the idea of **stages in the life-cycle** to describe people. The idea of **four ages** is becoming more common.

First Age	-	Childhood
Second Age	-	The age of paid work and family raising
Third Age	-	The age of active independent life beyond child-rearing and work - this can be as long as thirty years
Fourth Age	-	The age of eventual dependence - often very short.

What do you think of this idea? Does it have advantages?

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Myths About Ageing

From *Life After Work*, Michael Young and Tom Schuller (1991)

The term we have used instead of retirement is 'third age'. It refers to the phase which can now last for twenty, thirty, even forty years of active life after leaving work and which would in Britain alone account for some ten million people. The term is not ours but has the advantage, as Laslett has said, of being 'a term not already tarnished'[1], as many of the more usual words have become, even those with the most august parentage. Classifiers have never allowed ageing to be a continuous process. The almost irresistible temptation has been to chop it up and to make ages into stages. The later stages then become tainted. Aristotle made no bones about it: he proposed the straightforward three-fold division, which has retained its authority, of growth, stasis and decline. Shakespeare embellished the decline in *As You Like It* when he figured his sixth stage of life by the lean and slippered pantaloon with spectacles on nose and the last by second childishness and more oblivion, sans teeth, sans everything. Even when the notion of an explicit decline has been avoided, it is still implicit in a fourfold classification like that of the Venerable Bede into childhood, youth, maturity and old age, with old age standing in contrast to maturity.[2] But we doubt whether any of the three, Aristotle, Shakespeare or Bede, would have been content with their classification if they had been alive now, with people expecting to live as long as they now do.

The term we prefer is of French origin, as used in *Les Universités du Troisième Age*, and the clubs with the same name which proliferated in France in the 1970s and 1980s. It has infiltrated into English and gained some currency through the University of the Third Age which was started in the early 1980s. At the time of writing the British U3A has over a hundred branches. The new attitude which is called for by demography, if by nothing else, could be helped along by the new term as it takes its place in the progression described by Laslett: 'First comes an era of dependence, socialization, immaturity and education; second an era of independence, maturity and responsibility, of earning and of saving; third an era of personal fulfilment'.[3]

The staging is threefold, like Aristotle's, but with opportunity substituting for decline. Much dependency and poor health is induced by the general expectation that a long-drawn-out decline is natural, almost inevitable. As it is not the one, it is therefore not the other. It should become possible in the future for more and more people to ward off the diseases associated with old age so that more and more can avoid decline almost until the end. Before long it could cease to be a joke to say that the ideal is to die young at an advanced age. Certainly the goal of medical and much other research should be to cap the boon of a long life with that of a quick death. The short lives of the past were (before modern medicine) often finished off by a quick death. As we escape from one kind of brevity we do not want to lose the other kind.

1. P. Laslett, *A Fresh Map of Life*, p.3; 2. J.A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p.32; 3. Laslett, p.4

What do you think of Young and Schuller's argument?

Activity 3 **Growing Old Away From Your Country of Birth**

Many people in Britain today are growing older in a country very different from the one in which they spent their youth. There is often a sense of loss - the loss of family ties, of community and of respect for the older person. The following are some comments made by West Indian people in a survey carried out by All Faiths of One Race in 1981.*

> *Back home, family will look after you when you are old, but here they are too busy because they all go out to work.*

****

> *I didn't know about 'pensioners' till I came here ... we don't call people old. We don't throw people on the scrap heap.*

****

> *In England, when you reach 60 or 65, you become a social problem. No one cares about you ... if you are ill, that makes it worse. In the West Indies you don't finish at 60 or 65 - you are respected. The older you are, the more respected you are.*

****

> *When I was in the West Indies, people would assist you and not look for pay, but here you have to depend on the DHSS and the social services for any assistance.*

---

* Anil Bhalla and Ken Blackmore, 'Elders of the Ethnic Minority Groups, Birmingham, 1981', in Alison Norman, *Triple Jeopardy - Growing Old in a Second Homeland*, Centre for Policy Studies on Ageing, 1985.

DISCUSSION

You might like to split into smaller groups for this.

☐ How far do you agree that in some societies there is greater respect for older people than in others? (You may want here to refer to the article about older people in India, *Reverence fades as winds of change come from West* (p.32)

☐ Do you think that older people in Britain suffer from a lack of respect?

☐ Some people suggest that the reason for the greater respect given to elderly people in some societies is due to their accumulated wisdom gained in a society where change is slow. In many societies, including Western ones, change is very rapid, people's experiences and skills fall out of date. Do you think that this will affect how older people are treated in countries that are fast becoming industrialised such as India, Pakistan and the West Indies?

☐ Would you contemplate spending all or part of your Third Age in a foreign country?

☐ In what ways might older people be shown that they are valued? Does this differ from how younger people should be treated?

Reverence fades as wind of change comes from West

India

Ajoy Bose in New Delhi

India's rising population of the old faces many problems as traditional reverence for the elderly fades in the face of the new westernised urban values.

The country's aged population has been burgeoning over the past few decades. In 1971, 33 million were above 60 years of age, today there are 55 million and by the turn of the century there may be as many as 76 million in the over-60s bracket.

Improved personal hygiene and the spread of medical services particularly the increasing use of life-saving drugs are the main reasons for people living longer in India. The average life expectancy today is 62 years up from 54 just 10 years ago and a mere 30 years in 1947 when the country became independent.

The extra years for many old people in India have come as a mixed blessing. They have long been venerated in traditional Indian society but with the rapid change of social mores in the past few decades, old people have increasingly been marginalised and often humiliated by the younger generation.

This is particularly evident in cities and towns where the ancient institution of the extended family is being abandoned for want of space and the need for privacy.

In a society where elderly parents have traditionally wielded enormous clout as patriarchs and matriarchs, the fall in status is all the more traumatic.

To make matters worse for the old, human rights groups who are so active when espousing the cause of oppressed women are not so keen to take up cudgels on behalf of the aged.

For most old people however, the fear of being abandoned by their children is far more potent than a life of humiliation with them.

Every year thousands of aged parents are turned out by their children. In New Delhi, the number of burglaries with assault often resulting in murder of lonely old couples has risen at such an alarming rate that the local police have advised the elderly to move in with their children.

But in most cases, elderly parents have been living alone only because they could not find a place in their children's homes.

The circumstances of the old are relatively better in rural India were traditional values still hold sway but even in the countryside the spread of urban culture is making the elderly increasingly insecure. Unlike in the West, there are hardly any old people's homes where they can spend the last years of their lives in relative comfort and peace.

In the past decade however, there are some signs that sections of the elderly population are beginning to organise themselves.

The elderly activists feel that unless the old themselves agitate for better living conditions they may be totally crushed under the wheels of a rapidly changing society.

Guardian, 30 September 1991

Some questions for consideration

- Why are there more older people in India today than in the past?
- Why are older people in India losing the status that they used to have?
- What problems do some older people face, particularly in urban areas?
- What changes do you think older activists need to campaign for?

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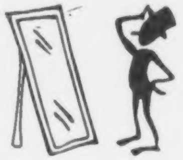
Activity 4 Images of Ageing



The following are extracts about getting older.

- ☐ In small groups discuss the extracts. Do you agree or disagree with these views? What are *your* views?
- ☐ Feed back to the larger group the positive varied experiences of growing older that younger people should perhaps consider.
- ☐ What would need to happen for more people to feel positive about being older?

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players:
> They have their exits and their entrances;
> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
> Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
> And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
> Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
> Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
> Full of strange oaths and bearded like the bard,
> Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
> Seeking the bubble reputation
> Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
> In fair round belly with good capon lined,
> With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
> Full of wise saws and modern instances;
> And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
> Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
> With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
> His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
> For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
> Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
> And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
>
> **Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII**

Why do there have to be any images of 'old age'? There used, I suppose, to be images of 'middle age' - 'fair, fat and forty' - but that kind of thing has passed out of fashion since women became more independent and developed more obviously individual personalities. If we do not typecast nineteen-year-olds, there is certainly no reason to typecast ninety-year-olds. They are, in fact, likely to have acquired with the years more emphatic, sharply defined characters. And whether this is so or not, *we know that people remain themselves, however long they live, and never become carbon copies of one another, with the same needs, wishes, skills, prejudices, likings.* Any one of us in our seventh, eighth and even ninth decade, looking in the mirror, sees himself, herself, as not essentially different from the young person of fifty years ago.

Mary Stott, *Ageing for Beginners*, Blackwell, 1981 (italics added)

'An era of personal fulfilment' sounds very hopeful, and it would be wholly unrealistic to suggest that this is what necessarily happens in the third age. We do not need any survey to produce older people who for a whole variety of reasons are thoroughly miserable. Such people are obviously not being fulfilled. So when we refer to the third age in this way, what we are emphasising is its potentiality rather than its actuality. We are thinking of older people as having a certain kind of freedom - a negative freedom from coercion - which they may or may not convert into another kind of freedom, the positive kind. 'Freedom from' is contrasted with 'freedom for' and the particular 'freedom from' which is possessed by the age-class is freedom from work. Instead of catching the same train every morning and strap-hanging to the same little desk, people can go fishing, read, dig the garden or do anything else that they could not do while bound into the daily round of work.

Michael Young and Tom Schuller, *Life After Work*, (1991) p.20

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Activity 5 Caring for People in the Fourth Age

> No one can convince me that any age in itself is a state of mind. And its ruthless enemy is convention, not the biological clock. Experience, maybe a long working life, and memory reaching back to a past crowded with men, women and events, are not often the stuff that apathy and disease feed on. Somewhere, environment and lack of occupation take over.
>
> The forbidding thing should be to brand all elderly men and women as senile. Everyone who lives grows older. The majority don't grow soured, helpless, or bitter and irresponsible, simply because the passing years slow down their tempo of living. One of my favourite visitors, well past her eightieth birthday, gets her car out and drives herself and a sister over to see me every ten days or so. And there's no special calendar to measure the time or capacity to think, or to feel. Exquisite singing, or a violin or oboe superbly played can send sensuous shivers of delight down an elderly spine. Besides, people do fall passionately in love at seventy, when 'with-my-body-I-thee-worship' still means precisely what it says.
>
> To care for old people calls for warm perception, patience and special skills. And not in these stark, disciplined lounges, but in some room where they can move about like human beings, where there is sunlight and fresh air, where sometimes they can listen to music, with nostalgic melody and rhythm that can bring back the happy light of other days. A single picture on one of these grim walls could open windows on another world.
>
> Men and women with terminal illness may have hardened arteries and creaking joints, but their minds are in no way crippled. For them to be enclosed in nursing homes where night and day, senility, with its apathy, strident garrulity, and frequently painful psychiatric problems, must call the tune for everyone, can only be a living death.
>
> Ellen Newton, *This Bed My Centre*, Virago, 1980

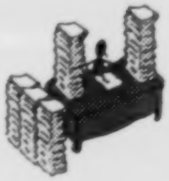
Ellen Newton wrote her book, from which the extract on the left is taken, while bedbound in a residential home.

What are her views on age?

☐ Using her ideas on your own, or in small groups, draw up ideal guidelines for nursing staff in residential homes, headed **'How to give the best care to people living in residential homes'.**

☐ Invite a residential worker from a home near you to come and discuss your ideas with you.

Activity 6 **Poems**



'Kate'

'Kate', the writer of this poem, was unable to speak, but was occasionally seen to write. After her death, her hospital locker was emptied and this poem was found.

What do you see nurses
What do you see?
Are you thinking
when you are looking at me
A crabbit old woman
not very wise,
Uncertain of habit
with far-away eyes,
Who dribbles her food
and makes no reply,
When you say in a loud voice
'I do wish you'd try'
Who seems not to notice
the things that you do,
And forever is losing
a stocking or shoe,
Who unresisting or not
lets you do as you will
with bathing and feeding
the long day to fill,
Is that what you're thinking,
is that what you see?
Then open your eyes nurse,
You're not looking at me.
I'll tell you who I am
as I sit here so still,
As I use at your bidding
as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten
with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters who
love one another,
A young girls of sixteen
with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon now
a lover she'll meet:
A bride soon at twenty,
my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows
that I promised to keep:
At twenty-five now
I have young of my own
Who need me to build
a secure happy home.
A young woman of thirty
my young now grow fast,
Bound to each other
with ties that should last:
At forty my young ones
now grown will soon be gone,
But my man stays beside me
to see I don't mourn:
At fifty once more
babies play round my knee,
Again we know children
my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me,
my husband is dead,
I look at the future
I shudder with dread.
For my young are all busy
rearing young of their own,
And I think of the years
and the love I have known.
I'm an old woman now
and nature is cruel,
'Tis her jest to make
old age look like a fool.
The body it crumbles,
grace and vigour depart,
There now is a stone
where once I had a heart:
But inside this old carcase
a young girl still dwells,
And now and again
my battered heart swells,
I remember the joys,
I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living
life over again,
I think of the years
all too few – gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact
that nothing can last.
So open your eyes nurses,
Open and see,
Not a crabbit old woman,
look closer – see ME.

- What do you think has made Kate write this poem?
- What emotions is she experiencing in the poem?
- What sort of life has Kate had?
- Why does she 'shudder with dread' at the future?
- What lessons might hospitals and nursing homes learn from this poem?

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JENNY JOSEPH, born 1932, UK

WARNING

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells

And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick the flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beermats and things in
boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear in the street
And set a good example for the children.
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practise a little now?
So people who know me are not too shocked or surprised
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

- This poem was the favourite of 1998 on Radio 4. Why do you think it is so popular?
- Why does the writer feel she can't 'wear purple' until she gets older?
- How do you challenge stereotypes of ageing in your behaviour?

RESOURCES

David Brindle, 'Life in Old Age Gets Longer but no Healthier' in *Guardian* 28.1.99

Janet Ford and Ruth Sinclair, *Sixty Years On - Women Talk About Old Age*, Women's Press (1987)

Growing Old Disgracefully: New Ideas for Getting the Most out of Life, Piatkus, London (1993)

Ellen Newton, *This Bed My Centre*, Virago (1980)

Alison Norman, *Triple Jeopardy - Growing Old in a Second Homeland*, Centre for Policy on Ageing (1987)

Mary Stott, *Ageing for Beginners*, Blackwell (1981)

Michael Young & Tom Schuller, *Life After Work*, Harper Collins (1991)

4

SKILLS FOR GROWING BOLDER

This section addresses some of the psychological and practical issues about gaining the confidence to try new activities, grapple with issues and debates and make our voices heard.

Gaining the confidence to do something often happens by doing it! Challenging the fear barrier is often an essential prerequisite to doing anything new.

So much of being 'bolder' is about confidence. Confidence can come from various sources. This chapter takes you through some of the skills and attitudes that make for a greater willingness to try something new. Learning, trying things out and practising with a group of supportive people is probably the most successful way to go about things - and it's enjoyable too.

Guidance for Group Leaders

These activities are not in any particular order, though it would be logical to consider first the psychological and informational barriers to gaining confidence and learning new skills (Activities 1-4). Particular circumstances are likely to suggest what other activities you cover at any one time.

WARM-UP

In groups of three ask people to jot down their various ideas on the Warm-Up sheet. Find out what each group has said. (Remind them that they do not have to agree with each other.)

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

GAINING CONFIDENCE

WHAT IS CONFIDENCE?

WHAT GIVES IT TO US?

WHAT TAKES IT AWAY?

HOW CAN WE GET MORE OF IT?

Activities

Activity 1 **Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway**

There are times for all of us when we put something off, or give up on it because of fear. Of course it may be justified. Fear can act as a protection against harming ourselves or others. Perhaps some things *are* best left undone.

However fear can also be a barrier to having exciting new experiences, making discoveries, learning new skills, gaining friendships. It can also stop us from speaking out against unfairness or injustice and generally having a say in the shaping of the future.

> "... it's never too late to attempt new things."
> Ann

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Do any of the following sound familiar to you?

* "I'm afraid of making a fool of myself."
* "They might not like me..."
* "I'll do it tomorrow..."
* "One thing may lead to another."
* "Nobody I know has ever done anything like that."
* "I'm scared of losing friends."
* "I don't want to upset my partner."

In small groups, discuss positive responses to these anxieties. It may be helpful to write them down and give everyone a copy.

I DID IT!

- Jot down some of your own experiences in the boxes on p.43.
- Share your experiences and ideas with the group.
- Agree in the near future to hear experiences of people who have done new things.

"I say to myself, if other people 'can do it' there is no reason why I can't. I also think how good I will feel afterwards."

Jean

"I feel daunted but a great feeling of satisfaction afterwards."

John

"I give myself a good talking to!"

Lettie

"People need to value themselves initially. There also needs to be more pressure put on the media to emphasise the value of older people. We should be more militant on this issue."

Margaret

What do you say ...?

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ONE EXAMPLE OF SOMETHING YOU WERE AFRAID TO DO AND NEVER DID	
WHAT WAS THE FEAR ABOUT?	
ONE EXAMPLE OF SOMETHING YOU WERE AFRAID TO DO AND DID!	
WHAT MADE YOU DO IT?	
HOW WAS IT?	
WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST TO SOMEONE ELSE?	

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

It is often the support and encouragement from another person that makes the difference between seeing something through and giving up. How can your group support each other in new ventures?

Activity 2 **Learning is For Life!**

FACTS

* Technology is changing faster than at any other period of history.
* Family and work are being rapidly transformed.
* More people are living longer
* There are many years to fill after fully or partially leaving paid work.

What has education got to do with any of the above?

In a book entitled *Life After Work* Tom Schuller and Michael Young argue the following:

> A second educational system for the third age will be required, with different characteristics from the first school-age system. Its ethos will be different, not designed to sharpen young people for the competitive world they are going to be thrown into but to prepare older people for a rather different style of life, with the emphasis on co-operation and self-development. It will need its own 'schools', not so much institutions as stimulating resource centres and mutual-aid learning circles. ... vouchers would also entitle older people to join in any of the classes of what have up till now been the orthodox schools, colleges and universities of the country - this as a step towards detaching educational institutions from serving the interests of one age-group alone. A third-age careers advisory service will also be needed to act as a clearing-house for information on paid and unpaid jobs for older workers, as a counselling service, a promoter of part-time work, a guide on training and, generally, an ally of this new parallel education system.

It would, of course, be costly, but for those who would demur on these grounds we present three arguments. First, there is the care for intergenerational justice. The vast majority of our sample left school at fifteen or earlier and never benefited from the huge post-war expansion of education. Three our of four of our Greenwich sample had left school at fourteen or under, a further one in ten before fifteen. Whatever disappointment there has been about the impact of that expansion on social equality or educational achievement, they never had the chance even to try themselves out. Secondly, there is the prevention of greater costs. 'Use it or lose it' is the motto of pre-retirement education, referring to physical and mental ability. The cost of *not* providing opportunity is not easy to quantify with any degree of precision but it will certainly be huge as the population ages, with more people falling into our third age. Thirdly, there is the loss of economic output from a more highly experienced labour force. Society loses by failing to allow older people to work if they want to, unpaid or paid. The loss is compounded by failing to provide these older workers with more advanced skills. A skilled voluntariat could be almost as cost-beneficial to the country as a whole as a skilled workforce of the ordinary sort.

DISCUSSION

1. What sort of educational opportunities do you think older people would benefit from as well as contribute towards?
2. Is it worth it? What do you think about Schuller and Young's arguments about the cost?
3. In a document responding to a Government green paper *The Learning Age*, Older and Bolder argue "the needs and aspirations of people over 50 are fundamentally the same as those of young people." (Older & Bolder/NIACE, *Realising the Learning Age for Older People*, July 1998) What do you think of this comment?

Learning Later ...

"It's a joy to learn something new. Having a 'butterfly brain.' I love finding out about everything." Ann

"Education helps satisfy my thirst for knowledge. It stops my brain atrophying." Pam

"I think when you stop learning you stop living. I can now choose what I want to learn, not have subjects inflicted on me as in school." Jim

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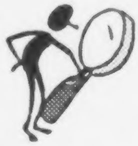
Activity 3 **Finding the Facts**



Have you used the following as sources of information?

Information Source	Tick	Give an Example	Useful?
Local Councillor			
Library			
Citizens' Advice Bureau			
Educational Course			
Voluntary Organisation			
Guidance Worker			
Local Authority			
Internet			
Business			

Information Source	Tick	Give an Example	Useful?
Trade Union			
Magazine			
Newspaper or Periodical			
T.V.			
Yellow Pages			
Social Worker /Community Worker			
Doctor			
Priest			
M.P.			
Social Services			

Activity 4 **Phone Phobia?**

Some people hate using the telephone - aside from the cost. These are some of the reasons:-

- You can't see who you're talking to.
- You often forget all or some of what you are going to say.
- People at the other end sound dauntingly professional.
- You don't know how to end the call.

Other reasons?

*

*

*

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Get your group to address the above questions and generate some phone 'tips'.

Phone Tips

Activity 5 **Speaking Up For Yourself**

What do you think of the following statements?

It is important that everyone's voice is heard.

Some people just sound good but aren't really saying anything very much.

People often think - falsely - that what they have to say isn't worth hearing.

It's easier to speak up if you have support (e.g. a friend) with you

Sometimes people have important things to say - but can't express them

You can tell when people have done their 'homework'!

(1) It is important you are heard.

(2) Don't be put off by pompous and self-important people.

(3) Everyone has important things to say.

(4) Make sure you have support.

(5) Practise.

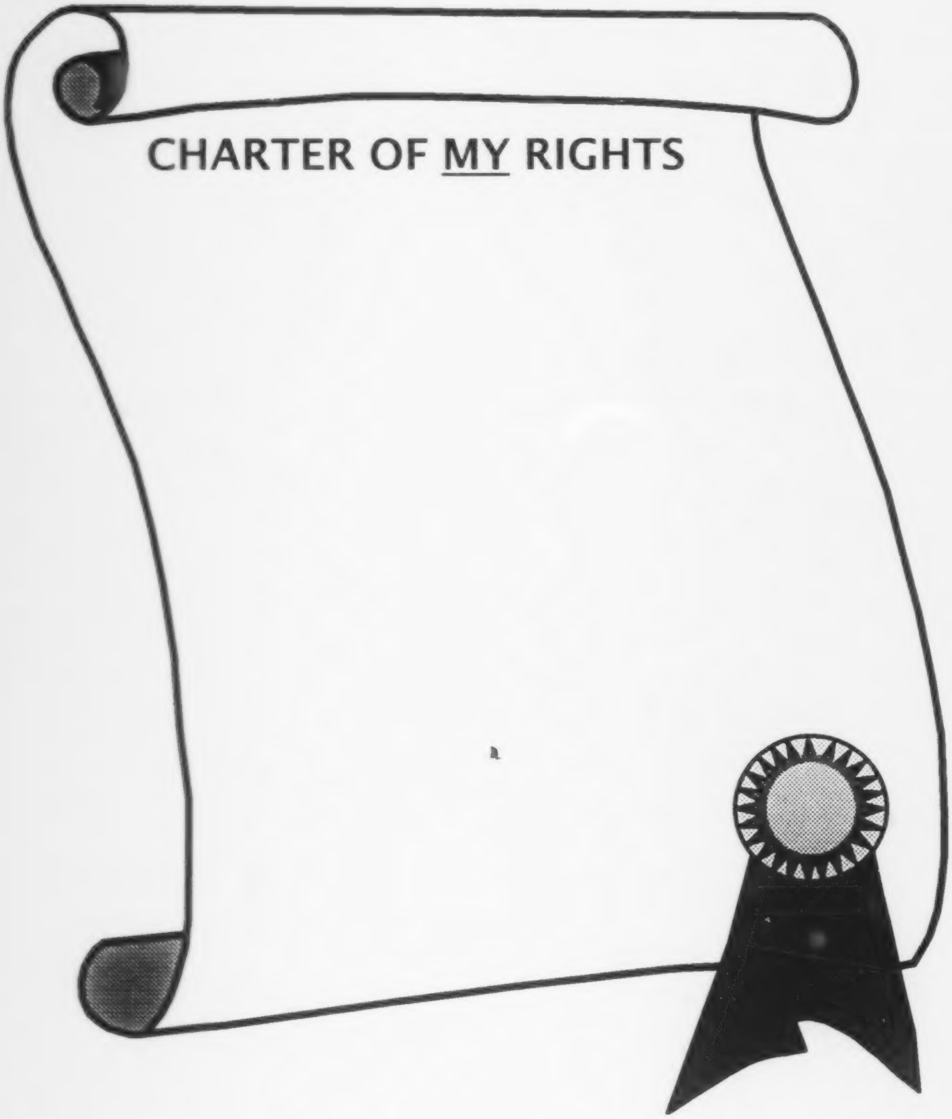
(6) Prepare.

> *"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."*
>
> Paulo Freire

☐ In pairs, write down your own list of RIGHTS, e.g.

- ❖ I have a right to make my views heard
- ❖ I have a right to be listened to
- ❖ I have a right to be taken seriously

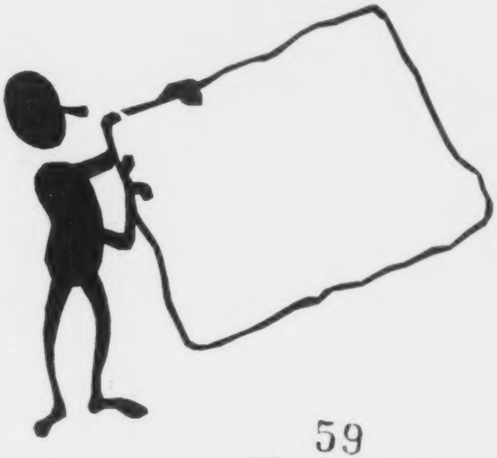
etc.


CHARTER OF MY RIGHTS

Activity 6 **Making a Small Speech**

> ***"Saying a piece at the conference helped me achieve something I never thought I'd be able to do - standing up and speaking. It was what I had wanted to do for a long time but never had the chance."***
>
> Ermine
>
> (Doing it Together, *Adults Learning*, Nov. 1997)

Everyone has useful and important things to say. Everyone also has a right to be heard. Still, it can be a bit daunting speaking up at a meeting or conference. What can help is planning your ideas and arguments in advance. For a more formal speech, that is of course essential.



PLANNING YOUR SPEECH

- above all keep your plan simple
- don't try to load your audience with too much information
- you might want to give them extra information on a handout

A useful format is:

Introduction:
- Why I am talking about this topic or issue
- What I'm going to be saying

Main Part:
Choose three main things to say; you can then elaborate on these, give examples, look at figures, etc. Keeping to three main points will help to give your talk a shape ... and keep people interested.

Conclusions & Recommendations:
Very briefly summarise what you have said and where your argument leads you. At this point you can make recommendations to your audience, e.g. changes you'd like to see, or what they should do if they are as concerned as you about a subject.

You might like to put your three headings on an overhead projector (OHP) acetate, or on a sheet of paper for each person.

You could write out your whole talk in full, but it's often better if you talk from notes.

Idea: You could use five postcards for your talk; one for the introduction, three for the main part and one for the conclusion.

- Choose a topic, e.g. transport or health care. Make up a short contribution each and deliver them to each other. Allow constructive criticism and lots of support!

Activity 7 **Writing for Effect**

Writing is not the most natural medium for everyone, like speaking is. Many seek to avoid doing it altogether. However, if you can get down to it, it's surprising how much easier it gets with some practice.

WHY IT'S IMPORANT

Being able to put your thoughts into writing is crucial if you are active politically or in the community

Writing a decent letter will ensure that you are taken more seriously.

If you want to get on with your education you need to develop your writing skills.

Writing creatively or imaginatively can offer new ways of presenting your ideas, and developing your talents.

Can you think of any more reasons?

WHAT ARE THE HURDLES?

Jot down what hurdles exist for you that stop you writing or developing your writing. Share these with your group.

ONE THING AT A TIME

The best way to break the 'pain barrier' is often just to do it! There are usually several stages involved in the process of writing. However, in practice these often blur into each other and it can often feel quite a muddly process. Don't let this put you off because it is quite normal!

It is well worth taking time over the planning stage of a piece of writing.

- *jot down any thoughts that come into your head ... it doesn't matter how random or disconnected they seem (this is called a brainstorm).*
- *when you have done this - cross out what you don't want; add in anything extra you have thought of*
- *plan an order in which you wish to make your points*

HOW TO BRUSH UP ON A PIECE OF WRITING

First versions of writing are often quite rough - this is true even for people who have written all their lives. Don't worry then that you might want to make corrections or do some re-writing.

- *read through your piece to make sure it all makes sense*
- *read each other's writing and point out areas that need attention - it is very helpful to get a second opinion*
- *check for repetitions, inaccuracies, incorrect use of words, spellings*
- *check for tired, dull language, clichés, worn out metaphors - see if you can say it differently*
- *see if you can make your point more economically*
- *consider whether you want to add something, develop an idea, clarify something difficult*
- *think about its shape ... does it flow ... is it logical ... would a different organisation make it clearer?*

Try one of the following:

1. A letter to your MP, local newspaper, local newsletter on an issue affecting older people.
2. A brief article for a local newspaper about your group.

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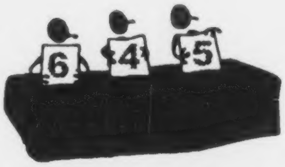
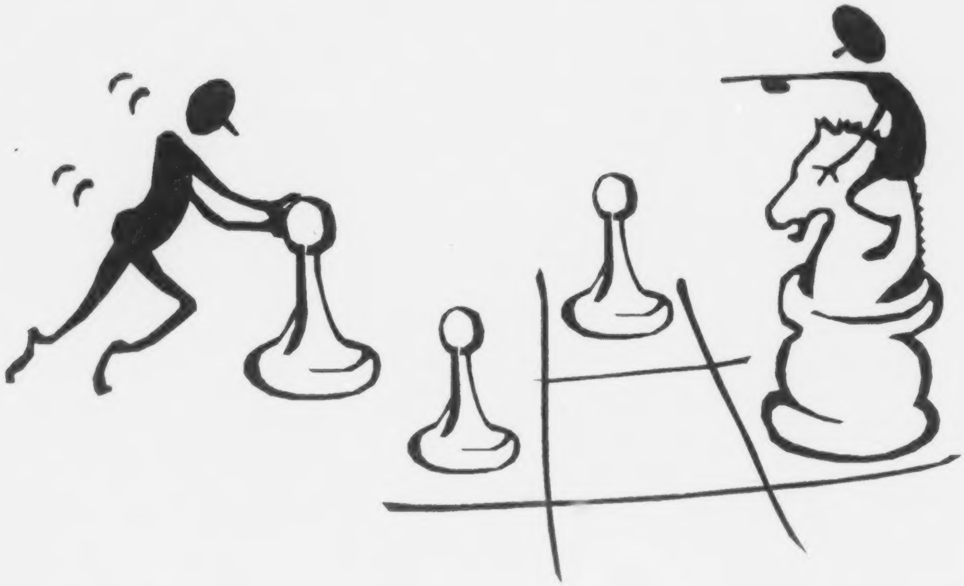
Activity 8 Figures Can be Fun!



Local and central government produce volumes of figures on lifestyles, services, demography, income distribution and so on. It is useful to practise using figures and making sense of the ways in which they can be presented. You can then start asking more probing questions - and refusing to have the wool pulled over your eyes!

WARM UP with a crossword and some puzzles.



CROSSWORD

1		2	■	3	■	4	5
	■	6			■	■	
7	8		■	9	10		
■		■	11	■		■	■
12		13	■	14			15
	■	16		■		■	
17			■	■	18		

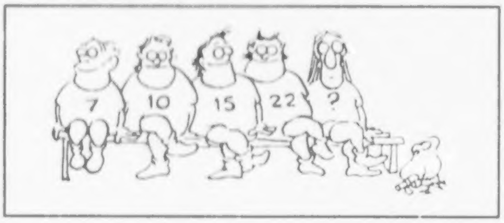
Across

1. A gross
4. The key of the door
6. Eight centuries
7. Pence in old pound
9. Yards in mile
11. Age of reason
12. Emergency!
14. Next century
16. 32 + 38 =
17. 10 ÷ 3 (and on and on)
18. Seven over 200

Down

1. 62 + 37 + 93 =
2. 12 x 40 =
3. How many Dalmatians?
5. Queen sends telegram
8. (16 x 8) + 263 + 68 =
10. Sixty four thousand and fifty two
12. 17 off 1000
13. 97 x 10 + 3
15. Secret Agent

(1) Waiting on the sidelines are the reserve members of the Cardiff Juniors' Rugby Club. The numbers on their shirts form a series. What number should the reserve wing on the end be sporting?



(2) Greedy Kate has cut a big cake into slices - a large one for herself and several smaller ones for the rest of the family. Three-quarters of the number of slices to the left of the big slice is six. How many slices are there altogether?

(3) What are the next three letters in this sequence?

OTTFFSS ___ ___ ___

(4) If 5 cats catch 5 rats in 5 minutes, how many cats will it require to catch 100 rats in 100 minutes?

(5) If you count 20 houses on your right going to school, and 20 houses on your left coming home, how many houses in all have you counted?

(6) How can you remove one-third of six and get nine?

(7) In the ping-pong singles championships semi-finalists Jess, James, Jill and Justin all had to play each other once. How many matches were played altogether?

(8) Thirty birds sit on the upper branches of a tree. A so-called 'sportsman' fires three volleys of buckshot at the birds, killing half of one-third of their number. Can you say quickly how many birds remain?

(9) How many months have 28 days?

(10) How many spaces are there between the spokes of two 8-spoked bicycle wheels?

(11) If all even numbers are green and all odd numbers are red, what colour is an even number plus an odd number?

NUMBER PUZZLES - ANSWERS

(1) **31** (series + 3, + 5, + 7 ... + 9)
(2) **9** (8 small and 1 big slice)
(3) **ENT** (One Two Three Four Five Six Seven Eight Nine Ten)
(4) **5** (In 20 minutes 1 cat will catch 20 rats. 20 x 5 = 100)
(5) **20**
(6) **Take 2 away from 11**
(7) **6**
(8) **25**
(9) **12**
(10) **16**
(11) **Red** (even + odd always equals odd)

Activity 9 An Age "Time Bomb"?

We often hear alarming warnings in the media or from politicians about the increase in older people and the strain this will put on resources. Have a look at the table below (*Social Trends*, 1998) and consider ...

(1) What general changes there have been over the years.

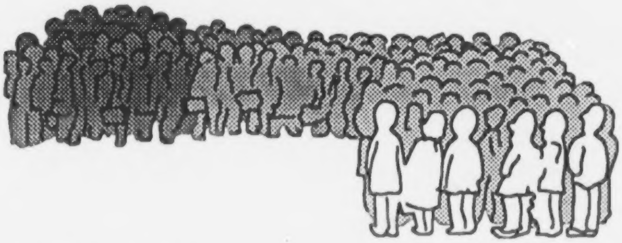
(2) Which age categories have shown (a) an increase; (b) a decline; (c) stability

(3) Which older age category has seen the greatest increase?

(4) Do the projections justify the term "explosion"?

(5) What policy changes should address the population changes, e.g. work, health resources, pensions.

(6) What does the public think about increases in public spending?



GUIDE: When reading tables ...

DON'T PANIC!

- Check the **title**
- Check the **dates** the figures refer to
- Identify the **source**
- Check the **measure** – is it millions, percentages, thousands?
- Check what **categories** are being used
- Think about what categories are **not** being used – does this matter?
- Think about what else you think has been **left out**

‘age-bomb’?

Population: by age

United Kingdom — Percentages

	Under 16	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over	All Ages (= 100%) (millions)
Mid-year Estimates									
1961	25	12	13	14	14	12	8	4	52.8
1971	25	13	12	12	12	12	9	5	55.9
1981	22	14	14	12	11	11	9	6	56.4
1991	20	13	16	14	11	10	9	7	57.8
1996	21	11	16	14	13	10	9	7	58.8
Mid-year Projections*									
2001	20	11	14	15	13	10	8	7	59.6
2011	18	12	12	14	15	12	9	8	60.9
2021	18	11	13	12	13	14	11	9	62.2

* 1996-based projections

Source: Office for National Statistics; Government Actuary’s Department; General Register Office for Scotland; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. ***Social Trends, 1998***

What does the public think about pensions? health?

Attitudes towards extra government expenditure[1]

Great Britain — **Percentages**

	1985	1990	1991	1993	1994	1996
Health	87	89	89	87	87	90
Education	72	78	82	80	74	82
Old age pensions	73	80	76	78	74	76
Police and law enforcement	38	50	54	68	72	70
Environment	34	61	60	54	48	41
Unemployment benefits	40	36	39	48	36	33
Military and defence	17	8	14	21	19	17
Culture and arts	9	12	15	10	12	6

[1] Percentage who thought spending should be ‘much more’ or ‘more’ when asked: ‘Please show whether you would like to see more or less government spending in each area’.

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey, Social & Community Planning Research *Social Trends, 1998*

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RESOURCES FOR GROWING BOLDER

Doing Your Research Project, Judith Bell, OU (1993)

The Arts and Older People, Fi Frances, Age Concern (1999)

Use Your Head, Tony Buzan, BBC (1995)

Using Informal Education, eds. Tony Jeffs and Mark Smith, Open University Press (1990)

Social Trends, (1999), Office for National Statistics - available in libraries

The Voluntary Agencies Directory, National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Telephone Helplines Directory, Resource Information Service, The Basement, 38 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DE

Directory of Health and Social Services Databases, Lynette Domoney, Library Association Publishing (1996)

C.A.N.S., The Citizens' Advice Bureau Handbook

A Woman in Your Own Right (An introduction to assertiveness), Anne Dickson, Quartet (1986)

5

BETTER GOVERNMENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

It is the turn of the century - so often a time for radical new ideas and the shifting of power to once marginalised groups. Never before have there been so many older people in society. Never before have older people been getting together in the way they are now to challenge old ideas, stereotypes and patterns of behaviour. The paternalistic idea of societies looking after their old folk is a definite improvement on poverty and neglect. However, people no longer want just to be on the receiving end of services and benefits, leaving politicians and professionals to make decisions for them. They want to be in there helping to carve out priorities and shape agendas. The belief that as you aged you became less important and had to give way to others is being roundly confronted and challenged.

This chapter considers some of the major campaigns and initiatives taking place today. These all take up the theme that people want to be 'participants not recipients'.

Guidance for Group Leaders

PREPARATION

You might in advance like to get hold of details about the new initiatives. Addresses are included here.

ACTIVITIES

You can pick and choose which activities you want to cover. The two warm-ups are a good place to start. The first is probably the more important as it raises the moral issue of *all* lives being of equal worth. The ideas of Better Government rest firmly on that basis. The second warm-up is something of a brainstorm for people to air their immediate ideas as to what Better Government *should* mean.

Activities 1 and 2 encourage people to consider some of the beliefs that Better Government is challenging and some alternative ideas - slogans, even!

Activity 3 is a quick check of who in your group has heard of which initiatives.

Activity 4 encourages people to consider what their priorities would be for local and central government.

Activity 5 allows you to hold your own Debate of the Age.

Activity 6 looks at the educational initiative Older & Bolder and encourages people to share some thoughts on how they would like to spend the future.

WARM-UP 1

ARE YOUNGER PEOPLE WORTH MORE THAN OLDER?

> Debate of the Age - A fundamental principle:
>
> *An individual's entitlement to the respect and protection of the community, and to equal access to its opportunities, does not vary with age or life expectancy.*

There is a strong presumption in our society, and indeed in most others, that a person's moral claims derive from their dignity and standing as a human person and are not dependent on any more arbitrary or particular features. It is this generality that is found in almost all declarations of, or conventions on, human rights. However, this leaves immense room for manoeuvre in particular cases. Many legal systems, for example, give increased legal protections to mothers of new-born infants. If we extend our thoughts to political rights and liberties then we find a fairly massive consensus that these apply progressively through late childhood and early adolescence and reach their full flower only with the age of majority. While at the other end of life it is not uncommon to find impediments from a compulsory age of retirement to employment, travel, and to access to medical treatment.

However, the fair innings argument has a number of defects. It assumes that the value of a life is to be measured in units of lifetime, the more the better up to a certain point, thereafter discounting begins. The problem is that people value particular events within their life disproportionately to the time required to experience those events. Although the fair innings argument attaches weight to a life having shape and structure, these things are again not necessarily only achieved within a particular time-span. On the fair innings argument, Nelson Mandela's entitlement to life-saving care from the community was over before he left Victor Verster prison; the long road to freedom would have ended before Mandela's release. And, it is not only for such as Mandela that the most important part of their life might well begin after a so-called 'fair innings' had been achieved.

- Are some people of greater value than others in moral terms?
- What are the implications of valuing some people more than others?

From: Millennium Papers Debate of the Age, Values and Attitudes in an Ageing Society

WARM-UP 2

Better Government means:

More ...

Less ...

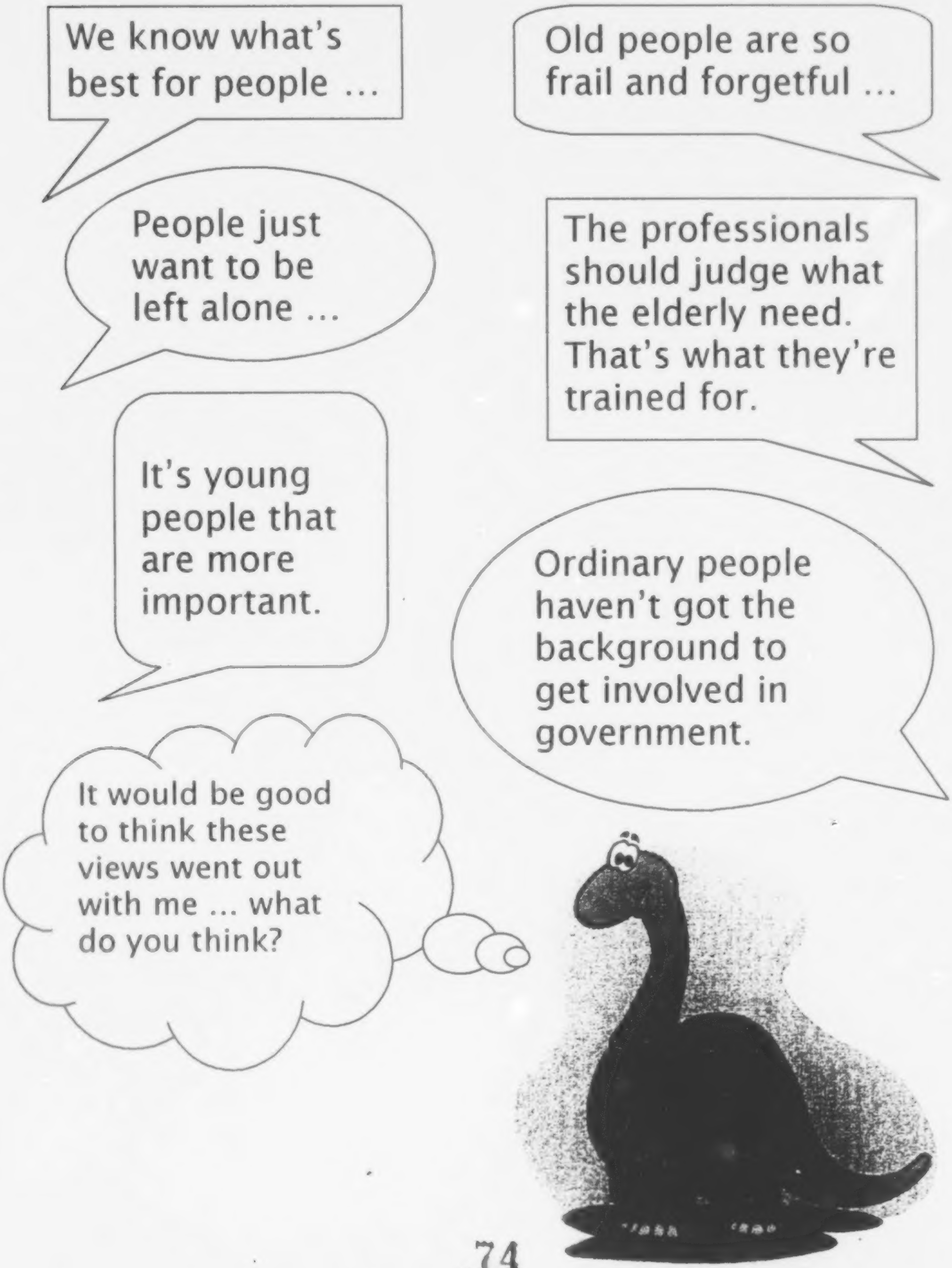
Involvement by ...

Priorities given to ...

Voices heard to include ...

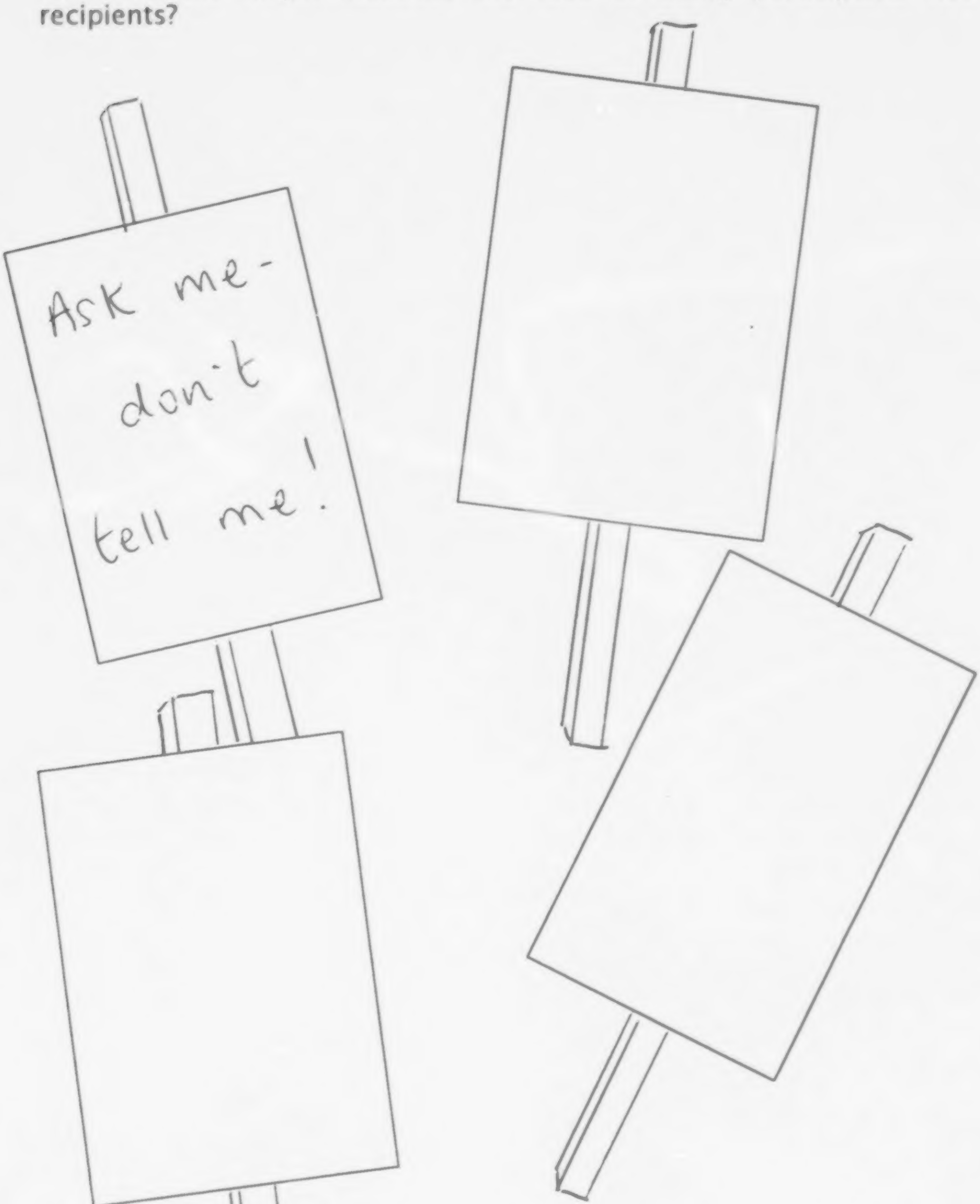
A future of ...

Activity 1 **"Participants not Recipients"**


We know what's best for people …
Old people are so frail and forgetful …
People just want to be left alone …
The professionals should judge what the elderly need. That's what they're trained for.
It's young people that are more important.
Ordinary people haven't got the background to get involved in government.
It would be good to think these views went out with me ... what do you think?

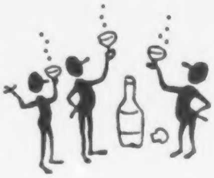
Activity 2 **Slogans**

What slogans might illustrate the idea of being participants not recipients?



Ask me - don't tell me!

Activity 3 **Better Government for Older People**



Better Government for Older People
"Older people as participants not recipients"

As we reach the end of the 20th century and start the new millennium there are a number of national initiatives in relation to older people. Each initiative or project has in common the fact that each is:

☐ Focussing on the value and role of older people in society.

☐ Asking questions about what sort of 21st century we all want for our own and other people's old age.

☐ Aiming to encourage and help older people to remain as independent and health for as long as possible. Health in this context includes mental health as well as physical well-being and 'social inclusion'. Social inclusion means that you feel a full and important part of society and the community.

These national initiatives are:		Heard of it? YES	Heard of it? NO
1.	The Better Government for Older People project	☐	☐
2.	Age Concern led Debate of the Age	☐	☐
3.	1999 The United Nations Year of the Older Person	☐	☐
4.	The Anchor Trust led Prevention Works project	☐	☐
5.	The Older & Bolder networks	☐	☐

In your group find out how many of these initiatives you know of or are involved in.

Activity 4 **What are your priorities?**

Better Government for Older People (BGOP)

This two-year national project runs from July 1998 - July 2000. Twenty-eight local authorities were invited to apply to be pilot sites and to work in partnership with a national team, over the two year period.

Since then many other local authorities have become involved and there are now over 100 in a national BGOP network. Many have started work on how they will take work forward in the longer term, after the end of the pilot project.

The focus of BGOP is on older people as full members of their communities and as citizens. Older people as 'participants not recipients'.

BGOP uses a definition of the ages of people that divides lifespan into four ages. The first age is childhood; the second that of working adult life and parenthood; the third age is that of retirement from employment and the responsibilities of dependent children; the fourth age is that of very old age, of physical or mental degeneration ending in death.

Professor Eric Midwinter, a much respected authority on ageing and old age, suggests that optimally we should spend forty years in the third age and forty minutes in the fourth age.

The work programme that the pilot authorities are undertaking varies from area to area. Priorities for action were developed locally and were built on what older people identified as priorities.

All the authorities are committed to continuing to listen to what older people say and all aim to involve them as fully as possible.

Identify ten things that would make it more likely you'd only spend 40 minutes in the fourth age.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

If you spent longer than this, what ten things would give life meaning and dignity?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Consider these lists. What priorities do they suggest for Better Government for Older People? Collectively identify ten and vote for five each (you can use post-its for this). For example:

Older People in Oxfordshire identified the following priorities for their county:

1. Transport
2. Easy access to facilities and information
3. Community safety
4. Customer care
5. Life-long learning
6. Clear quality standards
7. Full involvement in the Age Concern led Debate of the Age

Do these accord with your priorities?

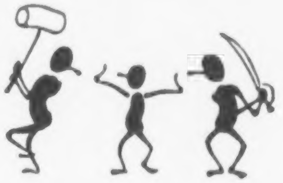
YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL

Is your local council involved in BGOP?

To find out, ring your local council, ask your local councillor or contact the
National BGOP Team,
The Development Centre,
Coxwell Avenue,
Wolverhampton Science Park,
Wolverhampton WV1 9RT.

Phone 01902 824270

Activity 5 The Debate of the Age



The Debate of the Age is co-ordinated by Age Concern, as the national council on ageing. It comprises a series of debates at local and national level; debates to discuss the challenges posed by Britain's ageing population and ask what kind of a society we want in the new millennium.

There will be a series of debate activities during 1999 and 2000, culminating in a national conference in the summer of 2000.

The intention is to:

☐ Ensure that informed opinions can be represented to Government at all levels and to 'opinion formers'.

☐ Give us, as individuals, the opportunity to reflect on how we can alter our attitudes and lifestyle to provide for the best old age for all in the next millennium.

The Debate has five 'strands' or 'areas of life'.

These are:

1. Paying for Age – the costs of an ageing society
2. Ageing and the future of health and social care
3. The future of the built environment as society ages
4. Work and lifestyles
5. Attitude and Values in an ageing society

Are there Debates of the Age taking place in your area?

To find out you could contact Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER, tel. 0208 765 7200, or your local Age Concern. You could hold your own debate. Contact Age Concern for materials.

COLLECT YOUR GROUP'S IDEAS HERE. SEND TO AGE CONCERN

Area of Life	How should we deal with these in the 21st Century?
Paying for Age (e.g. pensions, taxation)	
Ageing and the future of health and social care	
The future of the built environment (e.g. housing, facilities)	
Work and Lifestyles (how should work and leisure be organised?)	
Attitudes and Values in an ageing society (do older people matter less?)	

Activity 6 **Older and Bolder**

NIACE (The National Organisation for Adult Learning) launched Older and Bolder during the summer of 1998. Older and Bolder encourages local areas to set up their own networks to provide life-long learning opportunities for older people.

How much more positive to grow Older and Bolder than to age, deteriorate, give way to others or any other ageist ideas peopled used to have! It's a relatively new idea though, so it would be a good idea to share thoughts on how to do it ...

When people make ageist comments I will	I would like to try ...
I've always wanted to wear ...	I could look after my health better by ...
I'd like to get more involved in ...	I want to learn ...

GROW OLD DISGRACEFULLY!

OTHER CURRENT INITIATIVES

For more information about **Older and Bolder**, if there is a network in your area or to find out how to set one up, contact Jim Soulsby, NIACE, 21 de Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE, tel 0116 204 4200/1.

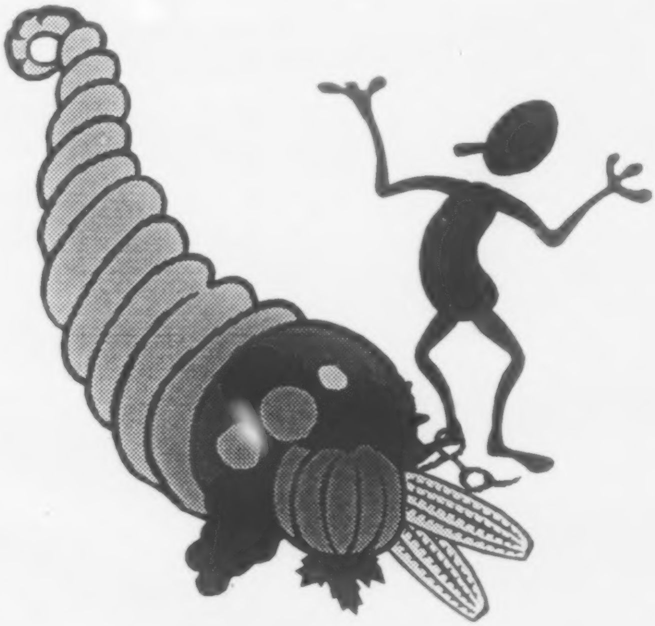
The United Nations Year of Older Persons 1999

The UN's UK Secretariat has produced an ideas and information pack to encourage and support initiatives during 1999.

To obtain a copy contact: Radha Patel, UK Secretariat, c/o Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER or visit their website http://www.iyop.org.uk

Prevention Works!

The Anchor Trust co-ordinated a national Prevention Works! Programme to promote the maximum quality of life for older people and help them to avoid dependence for as long as possible. A report on the outcomes and findings of the programme was published in summer 1999. To obtain a copy contact Louise Wood, Anchor Trust, Fountain Court, Oxford Spires Business Park, Kidlington, OX5 1YZ.



6

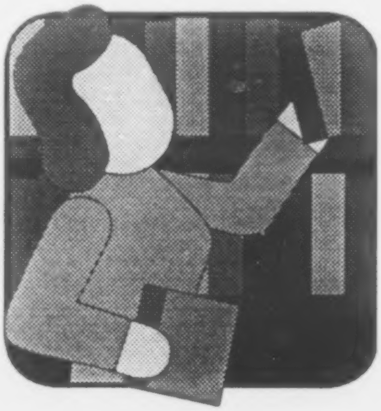
SERVICES AND INFORMATION

This section will help the group familiarise themselves with sources of information about services and welfare rights in their locality. It also aims to encourage people to speak up for themselves and, where relevant, complain.

Local authorities are responsible for social services. Social service departments are required to produce an annual Community Care Plan which should be available in all libraries, outlining their plans. The plan may also include information about how people are to be consulted about service plans and how and where they should complain about services.

There have been cutbacks in many services and benefits over recent years. There have also been cuts in advisory services in many areas. The group will no doubt have many experiences related to both inadequacy of services and actual cuts which may make them feel quite angry about provision. The materials here recognise problems in the level of and quality of services. They also suggest, firstly, that it is nevertheless important to gain access to information about your rights and, secondly, that inadequate services should be challenged.

Social services was chosen to illustrate how getting access to services and information works. Once you have familiarised yourself with *how* to get access to one kind of service and information you will find you have the skills and confidence to apply. Only about 5% of the population are in receipt of social services at any time. What it offers is usually not well known to the general public, so getting services and information calls for particular knowledge and skills.



Guidance for Group Leaders

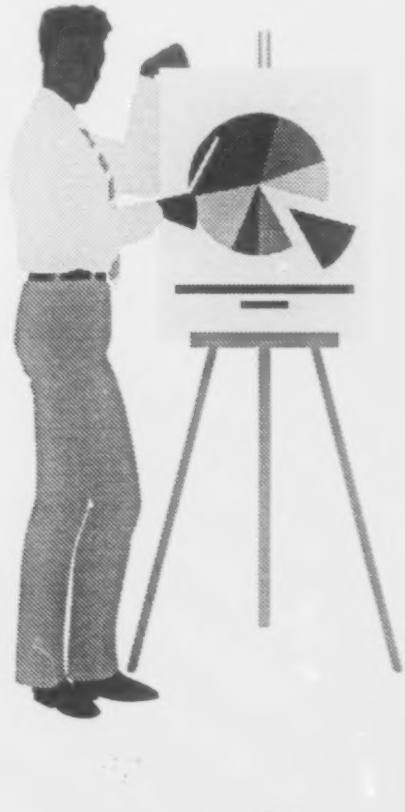
PREPARATION

For some of the Activities you will need to get hold of information from your local social services department and/or Age Concern about services for older people in your area. Their phone numbers and addresses will be in the local phone book, or obtainable from your local library.

Ask your social services department for a copy of the current Community Care Plan and any other relevant material that they publish.

This is a large topic and there is plenty of material here, so you may find it useful to spend TWO sessions on it.

Because of the specialist nature of much of the information people might want, this is a session that might particularly benefit from a speaker (see p. 83).



SESSION ONE

WARM-UP

In turn ask each person to suggest **ONE** service they particularly value and to briefly say why it is important.

ACTIVITIES

First, try a brainstorming Activity in groups of two or three:

Activity 1
Information

- ☐ Give each small group copies of the sheet entitled *Where Should I Go For the Information?* Ask them to collect some ideas for each question. It would be useful to divide up the questions to save time. Allow about *ten minutes.*
- ☐ When they have collected as many ideas as possible ask one person from each group to report back. Then pass round the sheets entitled *Some Ideas* ... (pp. 85-88). Make it clear that this is not a fully comprehensive list. Suggest they keep this list for further reference as they should find the information useful.

You could then choose one of the two following Activities. Both of them require access to information sources about services.

Activity 2 **Advice Manuals**	This Activity, *Using An Advice Manual*, involves using guidance manuals or leaflets in order to answer questions about services or information.
Activity 3 **Welfare Rights**	This Activity, *Welfare Rights - Case Studies*, involves discussion focused on some case studies.

You may decide to focus on one of these Activities, or involve half the group in one of them and half in the other.

As before, ask people to work in small groups. One person should agree to record the ideas of the group, ready to report back to the big group.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the session, ask each person to give one example of a piece of new information they find useful.

SESSION TWO

WARM-UP

Ask the group if any of them has used any part of what they learnt at the previous session since last week.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 4
Community Care

☐ Begin by asking the group what they think 'Care in the Community' means. They might mention a range of services, including residential care. They might point out that institutional care, for instance in hospitals, is giving way to care from other sources, including private organisations, voluntary organisations and families. They might also point out that many services have been cut or were never adequate in the first place and that whilst health care is free, people are means-tested and have to pay for social services.

☐ Give out the questionnaire called *Care in the Community* (p. 92). Ask each person to fill in the questionnaire individually and then compare with a partner.

☐ The pairs (or threes) should then tackle either all, or some (e.g. two each), of the *Questions* (p. 93). One person in each small group will need to write down some ideas in preparation for reporting back to the whole group. Point out that there will be disagreement and that groups should record the different ideas which they have.

☐ Allow about *twenty minutes* for small group discussion. Then in the main group ask the small groups in turn to report back.

Activity 5
Speaking Up

☐ Either read out the first section *What's the Point?* (p.95), or ask the group to read it to themselves.

☐ Ask for examples of times when members of the group did complain about a service (*Your Experiences* (p.96)). What was their complaint? How had they made their complaint? Did they get what they wanted?

☐ Then ask people to consider, in small groups, what the DOs and DON'Ts are about speaking up for ourselves (*Being Heard* (p.96)). What are the most effective ways of getting what we want and what are the less effective ways? Ask them to make two brief lists and report two ideas from these lists to the main group.

Activity 6
LETS do it

☐ There are hundreds of Local Exchange Trading Schemes in Britain. They are bartering schemes where people exchange skills.

☐ Talk about some of the skills members of the group could offer.

☐ Ring Social Services for your local contact and ask him or her to come and speak to you.

CONCLUSION

Ask everyone to suggest one item each thinks should be in the next local government election manifestos.

FOLLOW-UP IDEAS

Ask the group if they would like to invite a speaker from the social services department to talk about Community Care locally. Find out if one of the group would be willing to organise this.

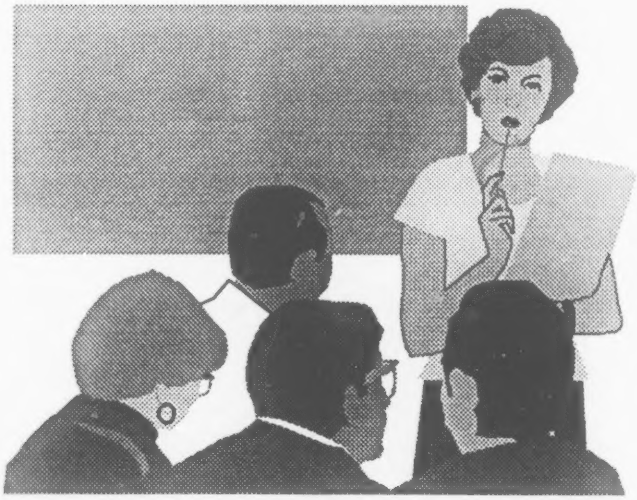
RESOURCES

- Try your local **social services department** and/or **Age Concern** for advice on local services.
- Local **welfare rights centres** will have information about rights and benefits.
- A useful reference is the *National Welfare Rights Handbook* produced by the Child Poverty Action Group - ask at your library for this.
- Another useful reference is the *Directory of Services for Elderly People* (1992), published by Longman/CPA - try the library or Age Concern.
- *CANS*, the national handbook of the Citizens' Advice Bureau, available in library reference sections.
- **Help the Aged** runs a confidential national helpline, with advice workers giving advice on a range of issues, including benefits, home helps, nursing homes, supports and aids, etc. **Telephone 0800 289 404**, Monday to Friday, 10am - 4pm.
- There may be local helplines too. Contact your social services department for information, or ask at the library.

SPEAKERS

It is very useful to ask for expert advice to deal with these complex issues. You should be able to organise a speaker from any of the following organisations:

Organisation	*Suggested Topic*
Welfare Rights Centres	Welfare Rights
Age Concern	Campaigns and Services
Pensioners' Action Group	Making your voice heard
Trade Union Organisations	Education and Campaigning
Workers' Education Association	Adult Education
Local Council Social Services	Community Care Life Long Learning Housing Consultation with Older People



Activities

Activity 1 Where Should I Go For the Information?

There are many sources of information in your locality. Collectively you will probably already know about most of these.

QUESTIONNAIRE

☐ In small groups of three or four, see how many answers you can think of to these questions. There is a separate sheet with some ideas on for you to compare with yours, but collect your own thoughts first.

Where should you go for help if ...

- You wanted to find out about education and leisure classes in your area?
- You wanted to find out what benefits you were entitled to?
- Your council house is in need of repair?
- You are concerned about your electrical wiring system?
- You need respite from the demands of looking after someone?
- You want to meet new people?
- You need help with the housework?
- You'd like to go out but can't manage public transport?
- You want to get involved with activities involving other older people?
- You want to find out what services and entitlements are available to you in the locality?

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WHERE SHOULD I GO?

Some ideas ...
Sources of information will vary from area to area and over time. The ideas below are therefore not hard and fast. However, they should provide a useful start to your search for information. There is a range of sources of information locally, as suggested on p. 82. Many organisations and local government departments now have web sites and information on what is available may well be posted on these. The new Libraries network is ensuring that all public libraries have the right equipment to provide internet access and trained staff to help people use it.

1 Education and Leisure

Probably the best place to start here is the local or central library. They keep a record of all classes. You could also try ringing or writing to your local **community education office**. The address will be in the phone book under the local authority heading.

The **Workers' Educational Association** runs many classes in towns and rural localities, some of them without fees. You will also find their addresses and numbers in the phone book. Your Further Education College will also run a wide range of courses.

Try your local **leisure and recreation department** and your local **community centre** too. Read your **local newspapers**.

2 Benefits

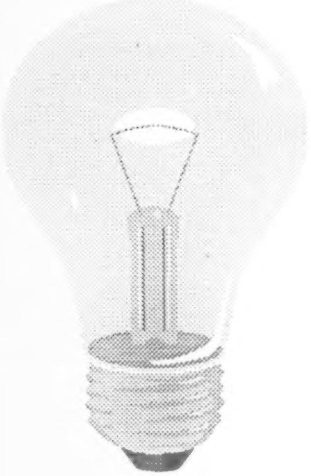
Try the **Citizens' Advice Bureau** or a **Welfare Rights Project or Centre**. You should have one in your locality. The number is in the phone book. Ring for an appointment, or get someone to do it for you.

You may also find there are **information and advice centres** close to you. Ask your library for information about these.

Some areas have a **Claimants' Union**. Find out from your library or information centre if yours has one.

3 Housing and Electric Wiring

Ring the **housing department** of the local authority, about public housing.



Anchor Housing has Staying Put projects in many parts of the country. They provide advice and practical help to older people who want to stay put in their own homes, but who are anxious about repairs, their rights or other matters relating to housing. They will be listed in the phone book.

If you have further problems, contact your **local councillors**. The council can give you their names and addresses or try the library. Many councillors hold regular surgeries and these are sometimes advertised in local or community newspapers.

4 Electric Blankets

Many Trading Standards Departments and Fire Safety Officers work with **Age Concern** to provide free safety checks.

5 Caring

Your local **social services department** or **Carers' Centre** will have information about the range of services for carers in your area, or contact **The Carers National Association** on 0345 573369.

6 Meeting New People

There are all sorts of things you can do.

Find out what groups meet at your local **community centre**. Your **local library** and/or **tourist information centre** should keep details of clubs and activities in your area.

Contact your local **voluntary services organisation** and find out what voluntary work is available.

Read the *What's On* columns in the local press and free press and listen to local radio. Visit the **local church**.

Contact **Age Concern** for their information.

7 LETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme)

Many areas have a LETS scheme. Locally people agree the value of a service e.g. baby-sitting, gardening. They then establish a local scheme where people trade skills, jobs get done, but no money changes hands. Your **local library** should have information on LETS.

8 Problems with public transport

You may have a cheap and reliable **taxi or Ring a Ride scheme** in your area. Age Concern will be able to give you details. A driver will pick you up from your door, deliver you to your destination and then collect you when you ask. Most Ring a Ride services need to be booked in advance.

9 Activities with other retired people

Contact your **trade union** office. Unions like UNISON and the TGWU have thriving retired members/ branches.

Contact **Age Concern** for details of any groups operating. If there is an **Older and Bolder group** in your area this will involve many active groups you can join.

Find out from the library or Age Concern whether your areas has a **Pensioners' Action Group**.

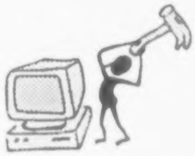
The **WEA** and **Community Education** run many interesting courses. Your local council and library should have a list of clubs and organisations.

10 Services and entitlements locally

Your local **Age Concern** will probably have an up-to-date publication or help-line and details of entitlements and services available. **Age Concern** nationally also provides very useful *fact sheets* on a wide range of issues.

Help the Aged (St. James Walk, London EC1R 0BE, **telephone 0207 253 0253**) also has useful information sheets and helpsheets. They run a national helpline called **SeniorLine** with advice on a wide range of matters (**telephone** 0800 289 404, Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm).

Note: Don't ever feel you are wasting someone's time by asking for advice. That is what professionals and public servants are paid to do! They usually get a great deal of pleasure from helping you and will give you all the help they can. This of course does not mean they can meet all your needs when there are cuts and shortages. But they will be able to help you make the best use of what is available. If the information you need is not available, ask why not. Government is clear that local and central government should be providing easy-to-access information on all services. As a citizen you have a right of access to good information.



Activity 2 **Using an Advice Manual**

For this activity you will need a set of advice booklets about services. Contact **Age Concern** or **Help the Aged** and ask for multiple copies of advice manuals or leaflets. You will probably need at least one copy between two people.

☐ Begin by thoroughly familiarising yourselves with the material, paying special attention to how it is laid out. For instance, check whether there are contents pages and have a look at what the contents include. Look at the back of books or leaflets and see if there is a subject index or a list of resources.

☐ Then, in pairs, *either* take it in turn to pose the following questions and let the other person try and find the answer, *or* together find out the answers to the following questions.

1. 'I would like to travel more by train or bus but I don't know if I can get concessionary fares'.
2. 'I would like some advice on a legal matter. Where can I go?'
3. 'My mother has Alzheimer's disease. Where can I find support for myself to help me cope?'
4. 'I would like to go swimming regularly - are there reduced rates?'
5. 'I have to plan a funeral but I don't know what to do and I feel shocked and upset.'
6. 'I can't cope on my income. What benefits can I claim?'
7. 'I need to find out more about residential care. What can I do?'
8. 'My neighbour's first language is not English and she has to go into hospital. How can I find out about language support for her so she can understand what is happening to her?'
9. 'I would like more general information about caring. Where can I find this?'
10. 'How can I keep warmer this winter?'

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Activity 3 **Welfare Rights - Case Studies**

The following are people faced with common situations.

☐ Imagine that they presented their problems initially to you. What advice do you think would help them and where would you direct them for further help?

Use publications from Age Concern, advice centres, etc., to help you in your advice-giving.

Case Study 1

Louise has a mother of 84 who has recently moved in with her. Her mother has Alzheimer's disease and chronic arthritis and can do increasingly little for herself. She is also very confused. Louise is not very strong physically and finds helping her mother difficult. Louise is also beginning to feel isolated and depressed. She would like to keep her mother at home with her as long as possible but is wondering how she can cope.

Case Study 2

Ben recently moved to Oxford to be near his sister. However, sadly she died. Ben now has to face making funeral arrangements in a place he is unfamiliar with. He is also feeling isolated and lonely.

Case Study 3

Dulcie has recently retired. She is fit and well but realises she has given her retirement very little thought and wonders how she can fill her days. She is very used to a day structured by work and has relied on work mates for friendships. She has a partner who retired four years ago and he is now enjoying himself with hobbies and meetings. He is very concerned about Dulcie's lack of things to do but doesn't want to give up any of his own

Case Study 4

Shanaz' mother has become very dependent on her. Shanaz felt obliged to give up her part-time job to be with her mother. She is married and her partner is in work but he earns a low wage. Shanaz is concerned about not being able to meet her bills and giving her mother the quality of care she needs. She is also concerned about receiving care from agencies who are not sufficiently sensitive to her mother's limited English. Shanaz herself is at risk of becoming isolated and lonely.

Activity 4 **Care in the Community**

In 1998 Government published its White Paper *Modernising Social Services*. In it it set out its new agenda for Social Service Departments and for Local Authorities as Local Social Service Authorities.

In relation to their own services Social Service Departments have been told to be much more pro-active in promoting people's independence and preventing dependency. They have been told to review the services they currently provide in order to ensure they meet these requirements. They are also required to listen to and work with local people and service users and their carers in achieving this.

In addition Social Service departments are expected to work in partnership with other organisations and authorities to ensure the whole range of public services that people need or may need work together. This includes working with the GPs, NHS and housing authorities, amongst others.

The thinking behind the White Paper built on Government's commitment to 'participants and recipients' and to 'joined up thinking' and 'joined up government'.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Tick which of these services:

1. You might want or need to use now or in the future
2. You think are important in keeping people independent as long as possible.
3. You feel you have had a say in what those services or facilities should be like.

Service	1. You might want or need to use	2. You think are important	3. You feel you have had a say
Clubs			
Local Leisure Centres			
Education classes			
University of the Third Age			
District nurses			
Affordable accessible public transport			
Help with home maintenance and repairs			
Re-housing			
Adaptations to the home			
Support groups, e.g. The Parkinson's Disease Support Group, Carers' Groups			
Day care			
Care in the home			
Care in hospital			
Long term residential or nursing care			
Information on what services are available			
General health checks			
Eye and hearing tests			
Help in the home			
Help in the garden			
Good food at reasonable prices			
Good disabled access to public buildings			
Mental health services			

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Services and Information

☐ When you have completed your list, compare it with that of one or two others.

QUESTIONS

☐ In small groups consider the questions below. Make sure someone jots down some notes to feed back to the main group. These are quite sizeable questions, so it would be a good idea for groups to tackle only one or two different ones.

1. In what ways do the services mentioned in the questionnaire contribute to keeping someone independent and well? How do they need to be improved?
2. Are there any services you would wish to add to these?
3. Older people are as varied in their needs as younger people. How do differences of *age, gender, disability, race, income* (and a combination of these) affect the sorts of services individuals need to remain well and independent?
4. What services would you like to see more money spent on and why?
5. Older people have the lowest take-up of benefits. How can they be better informed about these and other services that are available to them?
6. How far are better services dependent on more money being committed to them?
7. Do you think people should be automatically entitled to particular services (e.g. if they can no longer do their own shopping) or should professionals make decisions about their needs?
8. How available should residential care be? How should it be improved?
9. Does care in the community rely too heavily on families and women? What should be done?
10. Local authorities are expected to ask ordinary people what they thought about services. What are the arguments for consulting people who use services? How might this be more than just a token exercise?

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FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- Why not invite a speaker from the service area that most concerns you as a group? Ask them to explain their plans to you and how they propose involving older people in shaping those plans.

- Read and then discuss the following aims, objectives and principles on which services are based for one local authority Social Services department. How easy are they to understand? How could their intention be made clearer? How far do services in your area meet these principles? What changes would be needed to make them do so?

The aims, objectives and principles for Oxfordshire County Council Social Services department

The department will work with individuals, families, groups and communities to maximise independence, minimise dependency on services and intervene when appropriate.

To support this objective the department will:

Maximise an individual's life chances through services which:

- Are preventative
- Are rehabilitative
- Give protection
- Increase opportunity

Operate in a way which maximises cost effectiveness and efficiency through

- Working in partnership
- Maximising resources available to the department
- Having good information systems
- Effectively managing, maintaining and developing its workforce

Activity 5 Speaking Up

WHAT'S THE POINT?

- 'What's the point of complaining, you never get anywhere?'
- 'Nobody ever listens to me.'
- 'They don't really care about people like us'

These grumbles are understandable, faced as we very often are with large bureaucracies and seemingly incomprehensible systems.

However, think of this:

- If you don't speak out, people who organise and run services won't know that you find what they offer to be inadequate or misplaced.
- You will have no chance of getting better service yourself.
- You may be letting other people down who have a similar problem to you.
- Nothing will change – or if it does, it won't necessarily be for the better.

People do take note of what you have to say:

'Councillors stand for elections because they believe that they can improve services, so it's very important for them to know how people feel. It's hard to keep in touch with everything so comments from users of services, like Education, Social Services and Housing, are vital in helping them to do their job properly.'

Eva Barnes, County Councillor, Oxfordshire County Council

YOUR EXPERIENCES

- ☐ In your group, find examples of things you have in the past complained about. What did you complain about? How did you go about it? How successful were you?
- ☐ Find other examples of times when you would have liked to complain about local services, but didn't. Find out *why* you didn't complain.
- ☐ In pairs, or as a large group, consider how best to go about making your voices individually and collectively heard.

When you have completed this, compare your ideas with those that follow.

BEING HEARD

There are better and worse ways to go about making your voice heard. Certain ways are not going to get you very far and others may not be appropriate.

Worse ways

- Moaning and grumbling to friends and taking it no further.
- Bawling out a receptionist.
- Taking the law into your own hands.

Can you think of other examples?

Better ways

(a) *Try to get advice.* You may have a local Citizens' Advice Bureau or advice centre. Local help-lines or telephone advice services might exist - the library, Age Concern and Help the Aged might know about these. If it is a case of maladministration the local ombudsman might be able to help. The library will have the address of the ombudsman's office.

(b) *Contact the local authority* if your complaint is about a council service. Councils have leaflets informing you about how to take up your complaint.

(c) *Find out what stages are involved* in pursuing a complaint. You don't want to go straight to the top if you can get satisfaction from tackling the problem lower down.

(d) *Use a pleasant but firm tone* in your letters, phone calls, conversations. Don't get angry, but don't be walked over either. Have a clear idea of what you want as a remedy and pursue it.

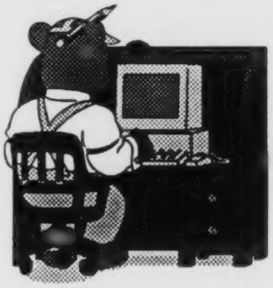
(e) *Some organisations offer advocacy*: a service that helps and supports individuals in exercising their rights and expressing their views.

(f) *Try to find a supportive friend*, welfare rights worker or other professional, especially if it is a complicated or upsetting process.

(g) *If the problem affects several of you, work closely together.* Agree on ground-rules, guiding how you will work together - you won't want one person making a decision without consulting the group, for instance.

(h) *Remember that you do have local councillors.* County, city, district and parish councils are responsible for different services, and councillors themselves may sit on different committees (planning, finance, highways, etc.), so find out which councillors will be more useful to you. The library or council offices will have this information. Councillors usually hold surgeries and are available at home for you to phone.

(i) *Your local MP will also hold a surgery.* Find out dates and times from the local press or library. MPs also do take note of their post bag. Your letter might give them the ammunition they need in a public debate.



(j) *Try writing to the press.* If you want to complain more publicly about issues with a more general application, e.g. closure of old people's homes, your letter probably stands more chance of being printed than you think.

(k) *Join a campaigning organisation.* Trade Union groups, Pensioners' Action Groups, political parties, Age Concern, Older and Bolder groups are all lively places to be. The Community Health Council (number in the phone book) acts as the patients' watchdog in relation to the NHS.

(l) *Your local council probably has a LIAISON group* for older people to voice their opinions about services.

Activity 6 LET'S do it

LETS

Information Sheet

LETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme) is a simple bartering network designed to provide for local community needs. They exist in the UK, Australia, Canada, USA and many other countries world-wide.

The objective of LETS is to encourage individual talents and initiative to help develop a community spirit which will benefit all of its members. Anyone can join, men or women, married or single, young or old, in or out of employment. It is a scheme where members exchange skills without the needs of money.

How does LETS work?

Using a local currency, members offer their skills, labour, or services. Produce and hire terms are negotiated between members using the 'standard' hour as a guidelines.

Having agreed the terms, the member receiving the service or goods, writes out a voucher (upon completion/satisfaction) for the agreed number. The member providing the service or goods sends the voucher to the LETS administrator and he or she is then credited with that number of the currency to their account; the recipient is debited with the same number.

How much will LETS cost me?

There is a nominal charge for the administration of the system (postage, photocopying, printing costs, etc.). These fees are kept low to enable everyone to join who wishes to do so.

How do I begin trading?

New members receive a voucher book and a directory listing all members, plus the skills and services that they offer. A maximum account limit (credit or debit) of 1,000 per member is applicable to every member. A regular newsletter detailing members' balance and requirements/offering will be circulated at regular intervals.

What are the rules?

There are hardly any rules. A copy of the rules and regulations will be sent to you when you join the scheme. This is reviewed at the AGM and may be amended by the members. A core group of members share out the tasks between them – so no job is very onerous.

LETS Start!

INSPIRATION LIST

Here's an Inspiration List of some of the OFFERS and WANTS that have been traded on LETS in the UK. It demonstrates the HUGE variety of skills we have between us. If you can't think of what to offer, or what you want, take a look at the list and think again!

HOME & DOMESTIC
Repairs – fridge, washing machine, radio etc.
Carpet cleaning
Chimney swept
China repaired or decorated
House minding
House moving
House "blitz" cleaning
Ironing
Washing up
Laundry
Logs
Pet sitting
Waiting for tradesmen
Shopping
Plant care during holidays
Use of washing machine

ARTS & CRAFTS
Artists models
Art & Craft workshops
Batik
Clothes made
Jewellery
Gift Cards
Embroidery
Tie dyeing
Cartoonist
Candle-making
Darkroom/studio
Pottery/kiln hire
Fabric painting
Mosaics
Outings to exhibitions
Paintings, sculptures
Papier mache

INTERIOR DESIGN
Carpet laying
Decorating
Fireplaces replaced
Furniture making/repair
Furniture stripping
French polishing
Interior design
Painting
Ragging, Marbling
Stencilling
Wallpapering
Wallpaper stripping
Kitchen design
Space saving design
Upholstery

BUILDING
Architectural design
Bricklaying
Plumbing
Carpentry
Central heating
Energy saving
Concrete mixer hire
Labouring
Plastering
Scaffold hire
Shelving
Skip hire

FOOD
Baking
Food co-op
Freezer meals
Home-grown vegetables
Cheese-making
Special diets
Catering
Candle-lit dinners
Birthday cakes
Fruit bottling
Wine-making
Herbs
Jams
Eggs

GARDENS
Bee-keeping
Chainsaw hire
Digging, pruning
Hedge laying
Hire of garden tools
Manure
Mowing, planting
Paving
Tree surgery
Patios, ponds, fountains
Garden murals
Permaculture design
Strimmer hire

ENTERTAINMENT
Band hire
Disco hire
Puppeteers
Piano lessons, tuning
Instrument hire
Comedian
Poems for birthdays etc.
Story-telling
Recording studio
Videos/books/tapes

Now let your mind roam over various other categories:

CLOTHING
BUSINESS
COMPUTING
ACCOMMODATION
HEALTH & PERSONAL
TUITION
CHILDCARE
TRANSPORT
etc.

7
RAISING THE ISSUES

The group of people you are working with are likely to have concerns and interests relating to current events or changes taking place which affect, in some way, their lives. They may have strong views on what should be done about something, locally, nationally or internationally. They may want to know what they could do to influence policy-making in these areas.

The purpose of this section is to allow the group to explore issues in greater depth in a variety of ways.

Guidance for Group Leaders

It is a good idea to find out well in advance what the group would like to discuss so that you have plenty of time to find materials or book a speaker.

WARM-UP

Begin by encouraging people to think and talk about issues of concern to them, using the Warm-Up sheet.

ACTIVITIES

If the group cannot decide on a topic then it is suggested you tackle the two issues explored in the pack, which are:

Activity 1 **Caring**

Activity 2 **Crime and Older People**

Each of these should take about *45 minutes to an hour* to discuss.

If you would rather consider an issue chosen by the group you will need to do some advance planning. Find out about four or five weeks in advance what topic the group would like to consider and whether it is likely that there will be enough available material on it.

Use the guidelines *Facing the Issues* (p. 103) to help you tackle the chosen topic. The group, individually or in pairs, may be willing to do

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some advance work such as acquiring materials, finding figures, scanning local and national newspapers and so on.

Remind the group that they will not always agree with each other about causes and solutions. They will need to be tolerant of each other's opinions, and in that way the discussion will be richer.

There are different ways in which you can bring out differences of view and hence promote a better understanding of different sides of a question. For instance:

Debates. Divide the group into two, each appointing a group leader. Ask the first group to think up as many arguments as they can FOR an issue and the second group to consider arguments AGAINST, for example, increasing taxes, charging for visits to GPs, capital punishment, etc. Then ask each group leader in turn to explain the arguments. Follow this with a general discussion.

Different viewpoints. Ask the group, in pairs, to take on the role of different participants in an incident or issue and explain how things look from their viewpoint: what the causes are, what should be done, and so on. For example, in considering joy riding, take the parts of the police, joy riders, social workers, the *Sun* newspaper, parents, affected residents, etc.

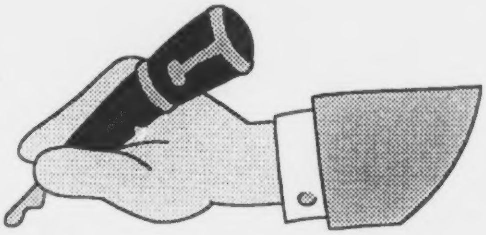
FOLLOW-UP

If a discussion goes particularly well it might be rewarding to find a speaker who could give you more information or offer a particular viewpoint (see *Organising a Speaker*, p.118).

Find out if the group would like to try the television soaps Activity (*Activity 3*). If they would, you need to decide a date two or three weeks ahead of time for the feedback session.

CONCLUSION

It often happens that issues seem so large and our influence so small that we come away from discussion feeling powerless. Use *Activity 4*, **What Can I Do About It?**, to encourage people to talk about successes they have had in making an impact on events.



RESOURCES

Local

- Use your **local libraries** to find information. Explain to the staff what you are searching for and they will give you a great deal of informed help.
- Many towns have **information centres** which hold records of different groups operating in your area.
- Use your phone book to find the local offices of **Help the Aged** and **Age Concern**.
- Try your **local government offices** for information and materials about local government services.
- The **Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)** has information about people's rights. The key reference book used is often in local libraries and is called *CANS*.
- Try also local **welfare rights centres** for information on benefits and rights – addresses should be in the phone book or available from libraries or social services.

National

- Use *Whitaker's Almanack*, available in most libraries, for addresses of institutions like **Shelter, Age Concern, trade unions, government organisations, embassies**, etc.
- Contact the **Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys**, St. Catherine's House, 10 Kingsway, London WC2B 6JP, **telephone** 0207 242 0262 for government figures on a huge range of matters.
- Find the easy-to-follow government publication, *Social Trends*, in most libraries for figures on education, health, housing, work, crime, etc.
- Write for a list of publications to the **Centre for Policy on Ageing**, 25-31 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP, tel. 0207 253 1787.
- **Age Concern** produces many free leaflets and a publication list – available from Age Concern locally, or nationally at Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER, tel. 0208 765 7200.
- **Help the Aged** also produces excellent publications and leaflets, available from St. James' Walk, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0BE tel. 0207 253 0253.

Warm-Up

FACING THE ISSUES

Spend a few minutes in pairs thinking about which issues, under the headings below, are of concern to you. You do not have to use the examples given - just think of ONE issue that is happening locally that concerns you today.

After a few minutes, share your ideas in the group.

☐ **Think of ONE issue each that concerns you LOCALLY**

e.g. traffic, joy riding, cuts in services

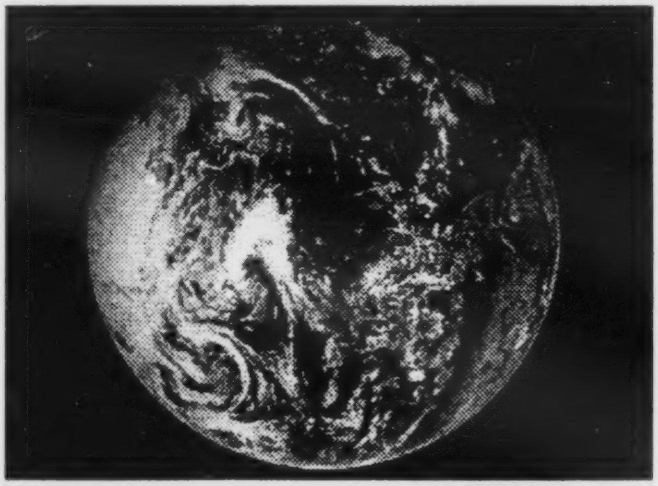
☐ **Think of ONE issue that affects you PERSONALLY**

e.g. pensions, caring, housing

☐ **Think of ONE issue in the news at the moment that you feel strongly about**

☐ **If there was ONE change you could make in the world, what would it be?**

e.g. end world hunger, make people more tolerant, governments to give more attention to the needs of older people



Activities

Activity 1 Caring

A carer is a person who looks after a dependent, disabled or frail old person.

This Activity aims to explore the implications of caring, for carers, and what can be done to help them.

Some Facts and Figures

What is the extent of care for disabled people in this country? Compare your guestimates with the answers at the foot of the following page.

1 *How many households contain a carer?*

5% 17% 30%

2 *How many carers are there?*

7m 8m

3 *What age are the majority of carers?*

Under 18 20-35 35-44 45-64 65-80

4 *What percentage of carers are women?*

20% 40% 60% 80%

5 *How much do carers save the state each year?*

£50m £600m £20bn £34bn

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Raising the Issues

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Are you, or have you ever been, a carer?
- Why are the majority of carers likely to be women?
- If the majority of carers are aged between 45-64, what stage of their lives is being affected?
- Nearly 51,000 carers are 18 years old or less. What do you think their needs are?
- The Carers' Act of 1995 gives carers the right to have their own assessment conducted by social services. What do you think some of carers' needs might be?
- Many people care for relatives at home because they do not want to put them into a home or other institution. What would a residential institution have to be like for you to consider it a real alternative to caring at home?

EILEEN'S EXPERIENCE

Begin by reading the article *She's My Lifeline* (p. 113)

As a group, consider the issues that are raised by Eileen's experience, for example:

- Is society reasonable in making these demands on someone?
- What sorts of demands does Eileen face on a day-to-day basis?
- How would you feel about needing to be cared for? How can this happen with dignity?
- Why are so many people in a similar position to Eileen?
- What do you think should be done about it?

Answers (1) 17% (2) nearly 7m (3) 45-64

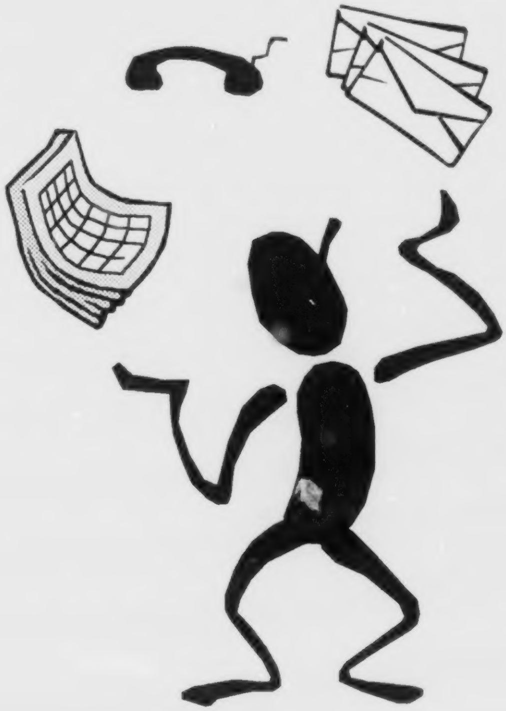
(4) 60% (5) £35bn

[Figures from Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys, 1996 and Carers' National Association - *Who we are and what we do* (1998)]

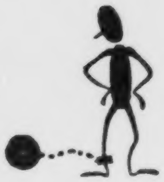
ACTION

A charter of carers' needs, *Carers' Needs - A 10 Point Plan* (p. 114), was drawn up by the National Carers' Association (20-25 Glasshouse Yard, London EC1A 4JS, tel. 0207 490 8818). The National Strategy for Carers launched in Spring 1999 is committed, among other things, to "assess whether any key needs of carers have been overlooked; to clarify the government's objectives for carers; to set out an integrated strategy for future action by government."

- ☐ Consider how the charter's different points might be achieved, perhaps working in pairs with each pair tackling one or two of the points.
- ☐ Still working in pairs, draw up a charter from the point of view of the person being cared for. What sorts of state provision ought we to be able to expect if we are/become dependent? How far should we be expected to rely on relatives?
- ☐ End with a whole group discussion. Is any picture emerging of the type of provision that would benefit both carers and the cared for? How could it be implemented?



Activity 2 Crime and Older People



THE FACTS

Older people are more likely to be victims of crime

True or false? Give reasons for your answer.

The facts are:

☐ Households headed by younger or middle-aged people are about 30 per cent more likely to be victims of crime than people not in work, such as retired people.

☐ In 1990, 6.9 per cent of under 30s were victims of street crime; 2.3 per cent of 30s to 60s; and 1.5 per cent of over 60s; young people were therefore more at risk.

☐ When particular groups are scrutinised, e.g. widowed females, crime rates against them are very low even when taking into account that they may spend less time outside the home.

However, crime rates are higher generally for street crime and burglary in inner-city and high-crime areas.

So, the answer to the question is, *false*: older people are actually *less* likely to be victims of crime ... especially violent crime ...

Oxfordshire Victim Support Scheme (1999) have around 10,000 referrals each year. The scheme co-ordinator described older people being the victims of violent crime as 'very rare'. Her belief is that older people are most at risk from thieves posing as bogus officials who then steal money and/or valuables.

FEAR OF CRIME

Older people, however, have the greatest *fear* of becoming victims of crime. The following are some of the reasons why this might be so. In pairs discuss these explanations and consider which ones you agree with. You might wish to add to the list.

☐ Lurid stories in the press.

☐ Feelings of vulnerability due to frailty.

☐ A general belief that older people are more often victims.

☐ The physical consequences of a push or shove (etc.) are much greater.

☐ The consequences of a burglary are much greater if you are on a low income - which many older people are - and possibly uninsured.

☐ Older people very often live alone.

☐ The heavy marketing of locks and other security devices can make people feel more alarmed.

☐ In some parts of Britain older people are more vulnerable than in other parts.

☐ Many older people are women and/or black - this makes them more vulnerable, regardless of age.

The effects of such fears

Consider which of the following you agree with. Can you add to the list?

- Self-imposed curfew; many older people will not go out at night.
- Stress and anxiety.
- Fear of strangers.
- Older people seem more frail and vulnerable than they are.

What could be done to reduce these fears? (including protection from bogus callers). Tick any of these proposals you agree with. Can you add any others?

☐ Better design of flats, council houses, etc.

☐ More patrolling of streets considered vulnerable.

☐ Better street lighting.

☐ More liaison between police and older people so they can find out what people's fears are and what they would like done to make them feel safer.

☐ Careful siting of older people's facilities.

☐ Particular focus on high-risk areas.

☐ Increase the number of telephones in homes and public places.

☐ More Neighbourhood Watch schemes, especially in low-income areas.

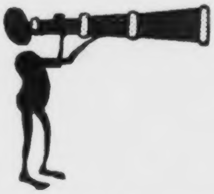
☐ More crime prevention.

☐ Talks by the police to lunch clubs, etc.

☐ More community policing, e.g. the bobby on the bike.

USEFUL READING

Eric Midwinter, *The Old Order: Crime and Older People*, Centre for Policy on Ageing in association with Help the Aged, 1990.



Activity 3 **Watching the Soaps**

Soaps such as *EastEnders, Coronation Street*, or *Brookside* provide some of the best drama on television.

Many of them set out to tackle topical issues such as homelessness, AIDS, relationship problems, racial and sexual inequalities, etc.

By following one of the soaps that does tackle issues it is often possible to gain a better insight into the complexity of such issues and to understand them better.

☐ Either individually or in pairs, decide which soap you will follow for two or three weeks. It can be one you already watch or a different one.

☐ Try and ensure that the group covers two or three different ones in total.

☐ Agree to report back in two or three weeks time.

☐ Use the *question sheet* (pp. 115-116) to help you think about the programme you have agreed to watch. Compare notes with your partner. You do not have to agree with each other - it's probably more interesting if you don't!

REPORTING BACK

☐ After two or three weeks, use the sheets you have filled in to help you talk about what you have been watching.

☐ Outline to the group which issues were dealt with and how. Comment on how well you think the issues were handled, e.g. did the programme explore the issues through looking at different viewpoints; did it widen your understanding of the issues?

☐ Would you recommend the programme to others?

Activity 4 What Can I Do About It?

We often feel helpless in the face of large events of great suffering. 'What can I do about it?' we often say and try to turn away.

However, there are many things which we can do to make our voice heard.

As individuals

☐ Write a letter to a local or national newspaper.

☐ Donate money.

☐ Arrange to see a local councillor, perhaps at a surgery (ring the local council offices to find out the names of your councillors and how to contact them).

☐ Write to your Member of Parliament at the House of Commons or at home.

☐ Join a relevant organisation campaigning for change (addresses in the library or information centre).

☐ Read up on the issues so you are better informed – all the better to influence others.

☐ Start a self-help group; get support in doing this from your health visitor, the social services department, community education centre, your local neighbourhood centre, etc. Raise the issue at any meetings you go to or with friends.

Raising the Issues

As a group

- ☐ Become better informed; seek more information; organise a speaker.
- ☐ Invite a councillor, official or representative of a relevant organisation to a meeting to answer your questions and concerns.
- ☐ Organise fund-raising activities.
- ☐ Take a stall at a local market, community action day, etc.
- ☐ Make contact with any other organisations locally or nationally and find out what they are doing and how you can help.

- ☐ Lobby your local councillor or Member of Parliament. Arrange a group visit and let them know your views. Invite the press.
- ☐ Develop some publicity such as letters, posters, leaflets, and send it to key people.
- ☐ Organise a public meeting or demonstration.

Discussion

- Tick which of the above you have ever done. Are there an activities not included?
- In small groups of 3-4, discuss what you have done and ho effective it has been.
- Ask one person from each small group to feed back some of th experiences of the small group.
- Have a general discussion about the most effective ways of getting heard.

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Activity 1 handout

'SHE'S MY LIFELINE'

Eileen Allen is a remarkable woman, yet there are thousands just like her: she cares for a group of elderly relatives. *40 Minutes* tells her story.

'If I'm in a jam, Eileen will help out. She's a wonderful person, a pillar of strength. She's so uncomplaining, I can call her any time.' Eileen Allen is her 87-year-old cousin Edna's link with the outside world. But Eileen's responsibilities don't stop there, for she is a lifeline and pillar of strength not only to Edna, but to five other elderly relatives, too. No wonder there are times, she says, 'when I'm so fed up, I think I'll emigrate and leave no forwarding address'.

Since her husband died, 63-year-old Eileen, who is featured in this week's *40 Minutes*, has had to cope with the six of them on her own. Demanding, argumentative, temperamental, frequently in poor health, they clearly need her. Eileen is one of thousands of people, usually women, who look after elderly friends or relatives, helping them keep their independence and dignity a little longer, because, 'well, if there's no one else, you can't just say no, can you?'

It began with her mother-in-law, Melinda. 'She is most unreasonably demanding, but I do it because of my husband. I have nothing in common with her, but I do it because Ernest would want me to.' The others – her 92-year-old mother, Ivy, her Aunt Rene and her three octogenarian cousins, Edna, Nelly and Rene – as Eileen puts it, 'fell by the wayside and appealed to me'.

There are other cousins who could help with the visits, shopping and general errands (all live close to Eileen's home in Rotherham) 'but they don't seem to want to know'. Eileen excuses her two sisters because one lives too far away and the other can't drive. Other relatives do what they can but have demanding families of their own. Eileen, aged 63, has no children. She says of the women she cares for: 'I know they would be terribly hurt if I turned my back on them.'

All the women agree that Eileen is marvellous. The trouble is they are all dependent on her. While recognising that Eileen has her own life to lead and they are lucky to have her, they each privately consider their problems and situation to be the most important. And there's the tacit understanding that it's family duty. 'It was taken for granted that children looked after parents when they were old and couldn't cope,' explains Edna. 'Yes, I think it's still true. If parents brought up and supported you, then you should support them.' But, two or three generations ago, families typically lived in the same street. Also, lacking modern medicine (particularly in the pit communities of South Yorkshire), it would be unusual for so many in one family to live to such an age.

Bright, breezy, cheerful, efficient, capable, generous-hearted, Eileen brings a humorous touch to her old ladies' lives.

'One of the last things I want the old ladies to think is that I'm complaining, because I'm not,' she insists, 'I'm just one of many.'

HELEN PICKLES

The Carers' National Association, 29 Chilworth Mews, London W2 3RG.
Telephone: 0207 724 7776

Radio Times, 3-9 November 1991

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Activity 1 handout

Carers' Needs

A 10 point plan for carers

Carers are people who are looking after elderly, ill or disabled relatives or friends who cannot manage at home without help. They may be the parents of a child with a mental handicap, a husband whose wife has a physical disability or a daughter looking after her frail elderly mother.

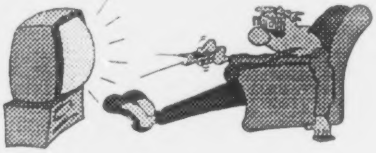
Carers come from all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Their circumstances vary enormously, with the severity of the condition of the person cared for, their economic circumstances and the overall help and support available. The majority of carers are women and many carry out the tasks of caring completely on their own.

Carers are deeply concerned about the needs of the people they care for; services need to be planned for and with them.

CARERS NEED:

1 **Recognition of their contribution** and of their own needs as individuals in their own right.
2. **Services tailored to their individual circumstances**, needs and views, through discussions at the time help is being planned.
3. **Services which reflect an awareness of differing racial, cultural and religious backgrounds** and values, equally accessible to carers of every race and ethnic origin.
4. **Opportunities for a break,** both for short spells (an afternoon) and for longer periods (a week or more), to relax and have time to themselves.
5. **Practical help** to lighten the tasks of caring, including domestic help, home adaptations, incontinence services and help with transport.
6. **Someone to talk to** about their own emotional needs, at the outset of caring, while they are caring and when the caring task is over.
7. **Information** about available benefits and services as well as how to cope with the particular condition of the person cared for.
8. An **income which covers the cost of caring** and which does not preclude carers taking employment or sharing care with other people.
9. **Opportunities to explore alternatives to family care,** both for the immediate and long-term future.
10. **Services designed through consultation** with carers, at all levels of policy planning.

Activity 3 question sheet



WATCHING THE SOAPS

Name of programme

How often is it on each week?

Where is it set?

What sorts of people is it about?

What particular issues are currently being portrayed in the programme?

Do these stories focus on matters that are of wider social interest? e.g. unemployment, marital breakdown.

Give an example of how one issue is being dealt with.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the way in which this issue is being dealt with?

Overall, what do you think are the strong points about this series, and what are its weaknesses or limitations?

Discussion guidelines

FACING THE ISSUES

As a group you might be concerned with a particular issue of local, national or international concern, e.g. pensions, homelessness, cuts in services, famine, etc.

Before approaching a controversial issue you need to bear in mind:

- that you will not all agree with each other and will need to be tolerant of different views
- that by listening to different views you will get a much clearer idea of the issues
- that you cannot believe everything you read in the newspapers or watch on television!

One way of approaching an issue or problem is by asking certain key questions.

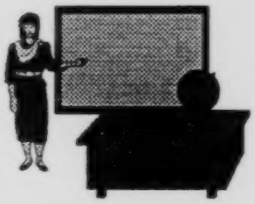
ONE **What is the problem or issue?**
- Do people agree or disagree about what the issues are?
- If so, what evidence are they using to support their viewpoint?
- How reliable is the evidence?
- What is the extent of the problem?
- Who is being affected?

TWO **Effects: what are the consequences for those affected?**
- Who are the winners and who are the losers?
- What is the experience of, for example, being unemployed, homeless, sharing a room in a residential home, winning the pools?
- What are the wider consequences, e.g. for the family, for the economy, for society?

THREE **Causes: what are the reasons for what is happening?**
- What different viewpoints are there?
- What is the evidence used to support different viewpoints?
- What are your views on causes and what evidence do you have to support them?

FOUR **Action: what should be done?**
- What action do different individuals or groups think should be taken?
- What would be the effects of different sorts of action?
- Who would benefit and who would lose?
- Would the problem be solved?

Follow-up sheet



ORGANISING A SPEAKER

One way of becoming better informed about an issue is to get a speaker from a relevant organisation. It is worth following the guidelines below to ensure this is a valuable exercise.

Guidelines

1 Find out from the library or local information centre which groups exist locally that have an expertise in the area that you want.

2 Contact the organisation by phone or letter and ask if they offer speakers and whether there is a charge.

3 Write to the organisation and let them know:
- ☐ Who they would be coming to speak to.
- ☐ What you would like them to speak on.
- ☐ How long you would like them to speak and how long will be allocated for discussion.
- ☐ Whether you want them to bring any visual materials, e.g. video, slides, etc.

You could also ask whether they have any information leaflets which would give you some background information before the talk.

4 Confirm the details of the date/time/venue/format with the speaker before the talk is due.

5 Make sure you have the right equipment, that the room is booked, that you have chosen someone to chair the session, and any other details, before the event.

6 Get the group to think of questions to ask in advance.

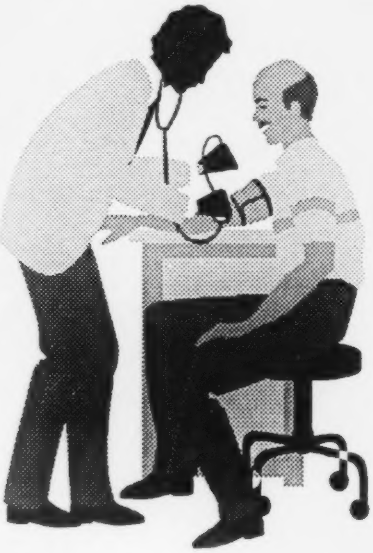
7 Make sure someone welcomes the speaker and introduces them to the group - find out how they want to be introduced. Introduce the group to the speaker.

8 Ensure the chair knows the planned outlines of times for the talk and discussion.

8

HEALTH

Everyone has their own ideas, experiences and concerns about health but on the whole being healthy is viewed as a positive concept and one to be valued. With increasing age we may become more aware of physical changes to our bodies and consequently may start to consider our own health in a new light. The tendency may be to dwell on the negative physical effects of ageing on health whilst forgetting the other aspects of our lives which contribute to our overall health. It is equally important to recognise that health is influenced by our social and psychological well-being in addition to the environment in which we live. By identifying that many factors contribute to health we can begin to explore what you can do as an individual and as a group.



Guidance for Group Leaders

WARM-UP

Introduce the subject by encouraging members of the group to think about their own health. Give out the Warm-Up sheet before you plan to start the session(s) so that they can think about some of the issues pertinent to health prior to starting the activities.

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ACTIVITIES

The activities cover three sessions and can be used in sequence of as a one-off. They are:

Activity 1 **Health and Wellbeing**

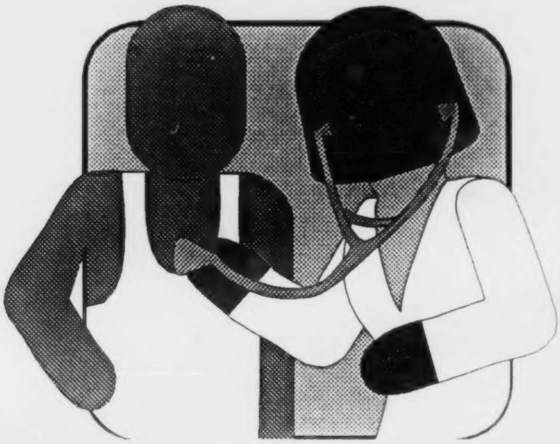
Activity 2 **Taking Action to Improve Health**

Activity 3 **What is the National Health Service and What is Happening to It?**

FOLLOW-UP

- ☐ Following *Activity 2* the group may decide to request the help of the local Community Health Council (CHC) or a local health professional to explore how to individually or collectively influence your health outcomes.

- ☐ Change is a constant in the system of care delivered by both the Health Service and Social Services. It is important to keep the group up to date with the changes and discuss how people feel about them. It might be a good idea to have regular updates from some of the organisations listed below.



RESOURCES

You will find most of these services in your area, and will be able to obtain their addresses and telephone numbers from the telephone book or library. They will be good sources of information for the Activity sessions. One of the fastest growing sectors on the Internet's World Wide Web is that of personal health information so if you have access to this facility it is worth exploring.

Anchor Trust

Age Concern

British Red Cross

Carers' Centres

Citizens' Advice Bureau

Community Health Council

Council for Voluntary Action

Help the Aged

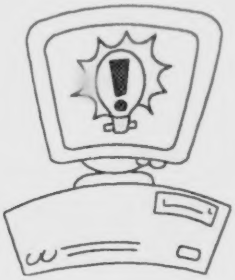
Health Information Service .
(a free service on the 0800 66 55 44 number)

Health Promotion Department

Local Authority Leisure Services

Local Authority Social Services and Education

Primary Care Groups (or your local health centre)



Warm-Up

HEALTH

Think about the following questions before you start your session(s) on health. A space has been left below each question for you to use for making a few notes if you feel like doing so.

N.B. Your notes are for your use only: there are no right or wrong answers.

- **What is health?**

- **What affects health?**

- **What sort of things do you think you can do to improve your own health or look after yourself without using the medical profession?**

- **What other organisations, apart from the medical profession, do you think have a role to play in improving or maintaining your health?**

- **What are your feelings about this country's health service?**

Bring this sheet and any other notes you have made to the session(s) on health.

Activities

Activity 1 Health and Wellbeing

☐ Begin by asking each person in the group to draw a simple picture or diagram of what 'being healthy' means to them. Then go round the group and ask each person to briefly explain their picture and correspondingly what they understood by the word *health*.

☐ It may be clear from the initial exercise that there are wide variations in people's concepts of health. The term *health* is often understood to mean merely the absence of illness. One of the reasons for this is because health is taken for granted and only considered when illness or health problems are interfering with people's everyday lives. The exercise below will help the participants identify the different dimensions of health and understand that the term health should be seen in a broader context to describe a positive state of wellbeing and quality of life.

☐ In pairs tick any of the headings that you think improve people's health in the broadest sense. Underline the five headings that are the most important aspects of 'being healthy' to you (and your partner).

1. Belonging to part of a family or support network
2. Feeling able to cope with decision-making and life's challenges
3. Housing
4. Income
5. Lifestyle (e.g. diet, smoking, exercise, etc.)
6. Recreation and leisure services
7. Services provided by the Health Service
8. Services provided by Social Services
9. Taking medication
10. Work

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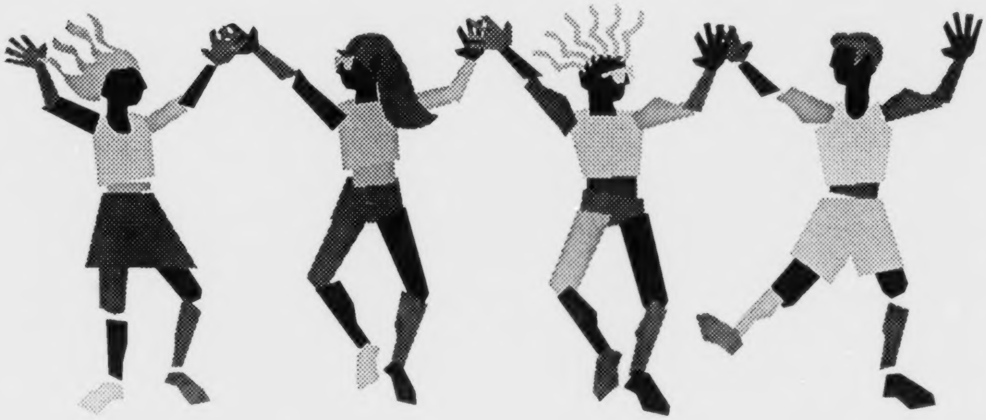
- ☐ Report back on each pair's ideas and the reasons for these choices, and then discuss what could be done to improve the health of (a) older people; (b) people on low incomes.
- ☐ Is there anything the group could do to bring about any of the improvements you have discussed?



Activity 2 What Action Can be Taken to Improve Health?

In *Activity 1* the group will have given some thoughts to the range of factors which do have an impact on health. In this session we will explore what factors can be influenced and at what level, either individually, collectively or on a more global or political level.

❑ Either individually or as a group consider the following, and list your responses in the table below:

1. Factors that influence your health which are to do with yourself as an individual

2. Factors that influence your health which are to do with your immediate social and physical environment

3. Factors that influence your health which are to do with your wider social, physical or political environment.

Health

Individual factors *e.g. gender* *taking more exercise*	**Social and physical environment** *e.g. type of house* *access to educational activities*	**Wider social, physical or political environment** *e.g. national food policy* *environmental pollution*

☐ In the whole group discuss:

a. What can you do to affect the factors you identified in the first column?

b. What can the group do to influence those factors which you have identified in the second and third columns?

☐ From this exercise you may decide as a group to invite a speaker, e.g. a health visitor, to talk in more depth about any of these issues.

Activity 3 What is the National Health Service and What is Happening to It?

The health service in Britain was established in 1948 by a Labour Government to provide free health care on the basis of need. The aim of this session is to use reminiscence to find out what changes the health service has made to the health care you have received during your lifetime.

☐ Discuss the following in small groups:

- What was health care like in your childhood?
- Who did you turn to for health advice?
- Could you access a doctor if you needed one?
- Did you have to pay for the service?
- Who delivered babies?
- What sorts of illnesses were common and how were they treated?
- Did people you know suffer or die from lack of treatment or inadequate treatment?

☐ How does this compare with the provision you get now?

Spend a few minutes studying *Figure 1* (page 129) on health service provision. Based on your experiences as a group:

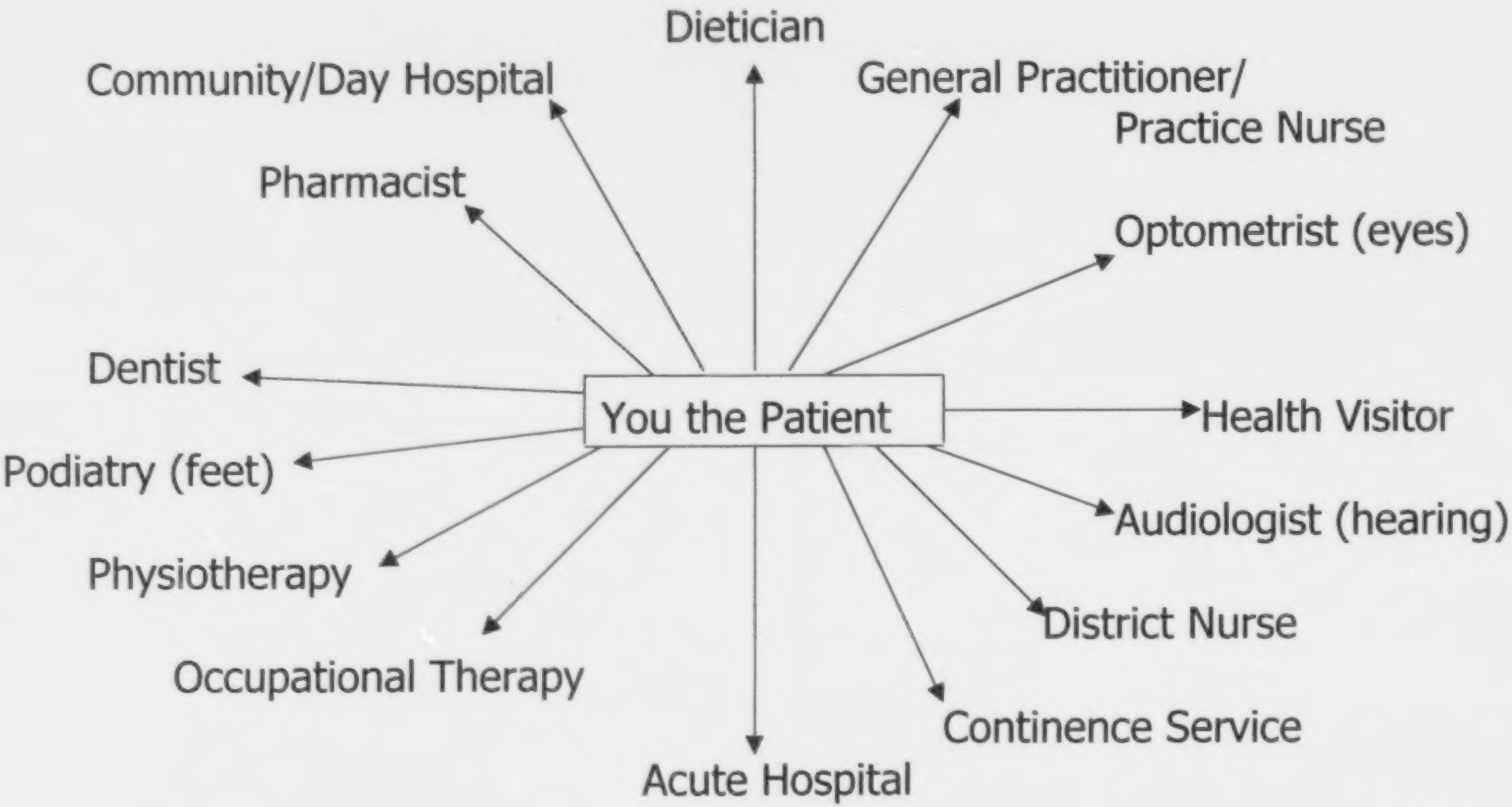
☐ List all the services you have received from the NHS since you reached retirement age.

☐ List and discuss how you think the recent changes will affect patients and staff in the NHS and the provision of services.

☐ If you were asked to draw up a 10 point charter for how the NHS should treat older people, what would you include? (Send your collective ideas to the Community Health Council).

Activity 3 handout

FIGURE 1, National Health Services


You the Patient

Dietician

Community/Day Hospital

General Practitioner/
Practice Nurse

Pharmacist

Optometrist (eyes)

Dentist

Health Visitor

Podiatry (feet)

Audiologist (hearing)

Physiotherapy

District Nurse

Occupational Therapy

Continence Service

Acute Hospital

9
CREATIVE WRITING

Creative writing is something everyone can do, and it can be a very satisfying experience to share the results with a group. People are usually surprised and delighted by what they can achieve and by other people's reaction to it.

The idea of creative writing is that it should be fun, stimulating, and give people a chance to tap their imagination and share the results with others.

Guidance for Group Leaders

PREPARATION

Some of the Activities need planning the session before because they require people to bring something like a treasured object, a short story to read together, photographs, or pictures cut from magazines.

If there are no tables, make sure people have something to lean their writing on, like clipboards or books (atlases are good!).

Everyone will need to bring paper and a pen or pencil.

Read the chosen Activity through together at the beginning of each session.

Begin by relaxing everyone and encouraging an open, trusting atmosphere by using one of the Warm-Ups on the Warm-Up sheet (p.133).

ACTIVITIES

The Activities provided suggest several ideas that can be used as starting -points for writing sessions, or you can devise your own. Each Activity will be enough for one session.

Having a common topic and a set time to write in makes writing fun and reduces anxiety - after all, no one could produce a masterpiece in twenty minutes! Reading out to each other and receiving other people's comments gives everyone a sense of both individual and group achievement and are very enjoyable. People are usually amazed to find how differently people respond to the same starting point or stimulus.

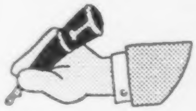
It is important to give everyone time to comment on and appreciate each piece of writing immediately after it has been read out. You can use the Feedback sheet (p.48) if you wish.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR EACH SESSION

Before the session

☐ Choose from the Activities an idea or starting-point to stimulate people's memories and imagination.

☐ Think about how you are going to divide the time. A guide is to allow approximately *5 minutes per person* for reading out and receiving other people's comments.



During the session

☐ Start with a Warm-Up.

☐ Introduce the starting-point Activity sheet. Allow approximately *15 minutes* for this. By the end of it everyone's brains should be buzzing with ideas and they are ready to start writing.

☐ Set the task and start everyone writing. Allow approximately *20 minutes* for the writing.

TAKE A BREAK?

☐ *Reading-out.* Introduce the reading-out by saying that after hearing each piece people might like to say anything they particularly liked, found interesting, funny, true, etc.

☐ Finish with a *general discussion* about the session. Did people enjoy it? Find it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the pieces of writing?

FOLLOW-UP

☐ Type up pieces and put them into a booklet, or make a display or exhibition of the work and mount it on large pieces of coloured paper or card to show in a local school, community centre or library. This is a good way of reaching a wider audience. It will interest them and may inspire them too.

☐ Invite an author to come and run a session for you to read out their own work or talk about their own writing.

☐ Borrow a video from the library of writers talking about how they go about writing.

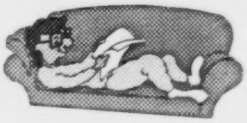
Warm-Up

Ask the group to complete one of the following sentences:

- A good thing that happened to me this week was ....
- One thing that I would really like to do is ....
- My favourite moment of the day is ....
- My greatest achievement is ....
- If I won £1 million ....
- If I could change the world I'd ....
- If I was writing the manifesto for the next government I would include ....
- A good way of relaxing is ....
- What I'd like to change about myself is ....
- Retired people need ....
- One good thing about getting older is ....
- During the war I ....
- My favourite writer is ....
- If I was going to a desert island the music I would take is ....
  ....

Activities

Activity 1 **Short Story**



PREPARATION

One person volunteer to bring a short story from a magazine or from a book of collected short stories. The local library will have plenty.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Read the short story aloud together. One person can volunteer or you can take it in turns.

☐ Spend *10-20 minutes* discussing it.

Discussion

- What happened? What were the characters like? How did they get on?
- When was the story taking place? Nowadays? In the past? What makes you think this?
- What was the tone of the story? Funny? Sad? Frightening? Mysterious?

WRITING

☐ Now prepare to write. Continue the story in one of the following ways:

Three years on

Or

The story from the viewpoint of another character

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

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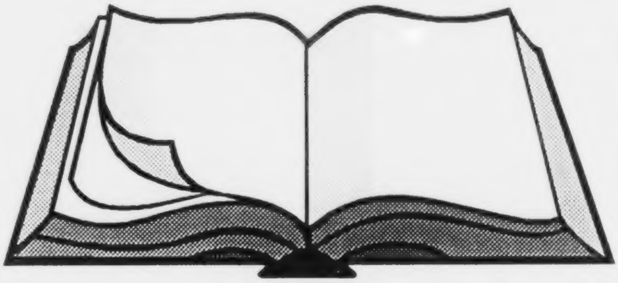
READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what you liked particularly about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?



Activity 2 **Hands**

PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Make a pair with the person sitting next to you. Look carefully at your own and each other's hands. Talk about them.

☐ All together in the group write down on a big piece of paper all the words you can think of that describe how hands look and feel ... **smooth, silky, rough, bony, plump,** etc. Next write all the words which describe what hands can do ... **stroke, clap, slap, cradle,** etc.

WRITING

☐ Write a piece called *Hands* in any way you wish (poem, prose, or list).

You could draw an outline round your own hand and fill it in with words which describe your own hands or tell their story.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

You could end the session by reading the poem *Hands* by Vernon Scannell (p. 147).

Activity 3 **Treasure Box**

PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

Sounds, sights, smells, tastes, feelings you treasure. The idea is that each person writes a line describing a sound, sight, taste, feeling, smell they enjoy and then these are arranged to make a group poem.

☐ Start by reading *A Box of Treasures* written in this way by the Barton pensioners' Club in Oxford.

☐ Write two or three lines each, starting with the words:

> *The most beautiful sound (or smell or taste or sight or feeling) in the world is .....*

Spend *5-10 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your lines to each other.

☐ Someone write them down starting with the sentence:

> *In the box we shall place ...*

Try and write them in the order which sounds best.

ENDING

Discuss the session and how you found it. Each think of an object which belongs to you which you particularly treasure. Share with each other. You could bring the object or a photograph of it - or just the idea itself - to the next session of the group and write about it.

BARTON PENSIONERS' CLUB 1990

A Box of Treasures

The sound of church bells across the fields
The noise in the club
My love of the sea and the sound of ships' sirens

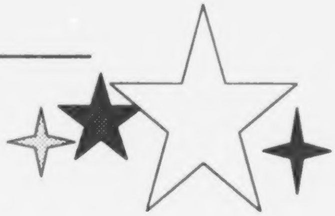
The quiet of the evening
The sound of waves on the shore
The peaceful dawn with only the sound of birds
A cat purring
The whirr of the milk float and the clink of the bottles

The blossom on the trees in spring
Jack Frost window patterns
The calm after the storm
The noise of the children in and out of the flats

Searching the beach for shells
The sound of different birds together
The clink of ice in a whisky glass
The sound of horses' hooves nearing the finishing post

Bluebells carpeting the floor of a wood
Perfume counters in exclusive stores
The smell of hyacinths
Another barmy idea!
The smell of crisp, brown fried onions sizzling in a pan

The sound of trees rustling and rattling in the wind
Walking through deep piles of autumn leaves



Activity 4 Themes

PREPARATION

Read this Activity through together and make sure the instructions are clear.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Agree on a list of three 'ingredients'. They can be anything.

For example:

an unopened letter
a river
the colour red

or

moonlight
a tree
a pair of shoes

WRITING

☐ Write a short story or poem including these three things. Give it a title.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

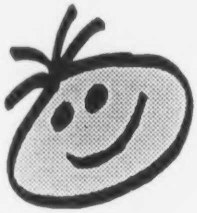
☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Common on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 5 Happy Ending?



PREPARATION
None.

STARTING-POINT
You are going to write a funny, romantic or sinister story with a last line which finishes:

> *'Well', he/she thought to him/herself, 'that's the last time I try that'.*

WRITING
☐ Write your story. Give it a title.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT
☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Try to guess which category each story comes into - funny, romantic, sinister, etc. Say at which point in the story this became obvious and why.

ENDING
Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 6 **Surprises**

PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

You are going to write a story ending with the sentence:

> *'I was very surprised', he/she said, 'very surprised indeed'.*

Start by discussing surprising things which have happened to you in your lives.

WRITING

☐ Write the story. Give it a title.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts. Was there a surprise? Say what was good about each story. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 7 **Mysteries**

PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

You are going to write a mysterious or sinister story.

WRITING

☐ Start with the sentence:

The door creaked behind him/her.

or

He/she saw the side of the curtain twitch slightly.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what made each mysterious or sinister (the words used? colours? time of day? setting? the characters and how they looked, moved, spoke?)

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 8 **Pictures**

PREPARATION

Each person bring two pictures (*of anything*) cut out from a magazine or newspaper.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Put the collection of pictures onto a table in the middle.

☐ Each person choose one. Make a pair with someone sitting next to you and, taking it in turns, explore what your picture means to you, why you chose it.

Take about *5 minutes* each.

WRITING

The picture might have sparked off a memory, an idea for a story of poem, or some reflections on life and society.

☐ Write about the picture in whatever way you like.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 9 Faces

PREPARATION

Everyone bring one or two pictures of people, cut out of magazines or newspapers, to this session.

Read this Activity through together and make sure the instructions are clear.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Put the pictures onto a table in the middle of the group.

☐ Each person choose one, look at it, and see what they can tell about the person's character and life from it.

> **The face ... any lines ... the eyes, lips, nose, set of the jaw, expression ... what emotion, if any, is conveyed?**
>
> **The clothes, hair, surroundings ... what can you tell from these?**

☐ Make a pair with your neighbour and tell them what you think about the person in the picture you have chosen. (Talking about something first often makes it easier to write about.)

☐ Spend about *15-20 minutes* on this.

WRITING

☐ Write a short piece called *A Day In My Life* as if you were the person in your picture. Include what you feel and think as that person as well as what you do.

☐ Spend about *15-20 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult?

Activity 10 Encounters

PREPARATION

Read this Activity through together and make sure the instructions are clear.

Bring your pieces entitled *A Day In My Life* to this session.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Get into pairs.

☐ Look at your *A Day In My Life* pieces and work out an imaginary meeting between the two characters.

Where would this be?
When? What time of year? Day?
How would they meet?
What would happen?

Spend *10-15 minutes* on this.

WRITING

☐ Write down the dialogue. It can be quite brief but try to make it in character.

Spend *5 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Each pair first tell the rest of the group which two characters they've been working with. Then describe the meeting, where it was, when it was, how it came about, what happened ... and finally read out the dialogue.

FEEDBACK

☐ Everyone in the group can have a chance to comment on how convincing the meeting sounds and how in character the dialogue is.

Activity 11 Poem

PREPARATION

☐ Have one photocopy of the poem *Hands* by Vernon Scannell for each person. Bring a dictionary.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Someone volunteer to read *Hands* aloud.

☐ Everyone read through it silently.

☐ Discuss the poem.

Discussion

- What is the poem about?
- Any difficult words? (Look up!)
- Read again lines 3-12. What is the poet saying here?
- Lines 19-21: why does he like 'old labouring men's' hands?
- What is the effect on us of the last five lines?

Finally look at the words the poet uses to describe how hands look and feel or what they do.

WRITING

☐ Write your own piece called *Hands* in any way you like. Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activities 2 & 11 handout

VERNON SCANNELL
Hands

Hands can be eloquent though sometimes they
Mislead us utterly in what they say.
I have seen slender fingered, candle-white
Supple and fluent hands that many might
Call 'sensitive', 'a pianist's hands', 'artistic':
But these were owned by someone mean, sadistic,
Hostile to art, a gross materialist.
I know another man, fine pianist,
Whose powerful, sausage fingered, meaty fists
Should hand from goal-keeper's or butcher's wrists,
Yet on the gleaming keys these hands could wake
Ghosts of drowned nightingales
I knew a fighter too, fast welterweight,
Whose punches could crack bone and could create
Sudden shattered galaxies in the head,
Yet from his hands alone you might have said
That he was not unusually strong.
For they were hairless, pale, the fingers long.
So many hands will tell us lies, but I
Have never known old labouring men's deny
Their simple character, they never lie.
For years they have manhandled spade or hook,
Shovel, axe or pick until they look
Like weathered tools, mattock, hammer, vice,
Battered, annealed by wind and sun and ice.
I like to watch them rest of tables, knees,
Lifting a pint of beer or with deft ease
Rolling a fag which later burns between
Dark, oaken knuckles which have never been
Surely as soft and sensitive to pain
As this pen-pusher's hand I look at now;
But most of all I like to witness how
They lift small, tired grandchildren and hold
Them curled and safe, how gently they enfold
Their always welcome, always cherished guests,
Become protecting, gnarled and living nests.

Taken from Vernon Scannell, *Funeral Games and Other Poems*, Robson Books, 1987

Feedback Sheet

These are some of the questions you might like to consider when reading-out and discussing the group's work.

- What did you (the writer) hope to get across and how well do you think you succeeded?
- Is there anything in particular you would like comments on?

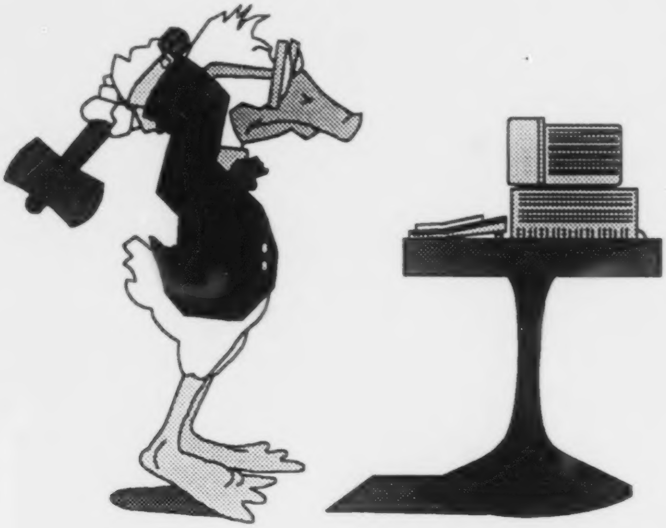
The idea?

Any words or phrases?

The flow of the piece?

The beginning/the ending?

Anything else?



RESOURCES

Fi Frances, *The Arts and Older People*, Age Concern (1999)

Vi Hughes, *Literature Belongs to Everyone*, available from the Arts Council of Great Britain

10

READING FOR PLEASURE

Reading novels, poems and short stories is a lifelong pleasure and this can be enhanced by discussion with others. Often, when we have read a book we enjoy talking about it with our friends and by forming a reading group we can have the opportunity to share our responses. We can hear if others agreed with the ending, whether they shared our opinions about the characters and the meaning of the book and see what the book or poem said to us as individuals.

This can be done informally by simply choosing a poem or story, reading it and then talking about it afterwards.

If you would like to have a more structured discussion, you can also think about the way in which a piece is written and how this contributes to its meaning.

Guidance for Group Leaders

ACTIVITIES

Activities 1 and *2* encourage you to look in detail at two poems.

Activities 3 and *4* suggest ways of structuring a discussion about any poem or story which you choose.

Activity 5 is a short story by Toni Cade Bambara about a young girl and her birthday.

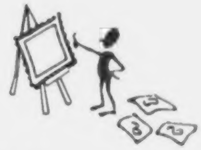
Activity 6 looks at a selection of poetry from Africa that reflects the troubles the poets' have witnessed.

Activity 7 is a poem by Margaret Atwood *'Siren Song'*, which re-tells a myth from a modern perspective.

RESOURCES

Your local library will have other collections of short stories and poems. In particular, anthologies will provide you with collections of work by different writers that concentrate on a specific theme, such as love.

WARM-UP



WHAT HAS CULTURE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

☐ What do you think about the following statements?

"It's about spiritual development, individual and human happiness. Everyone should have the chance to try all the experiences that human beings find enriching. And, people don't usually reject.. It's fear that stops them.

Cultural fear - this needs exploring. Why do some Labour politicians talk down to people? Is it that cultured people aren't socialists? Or are the highly educated socialists themselves full of 'cultural fear' as a kind of élitism or arrogance?"

John Edmonds
General Secretary, General Municipal & Boilermakers Union

"The value of literature, more particularly, is to do with democracy. It helps us to understand how language controls us. Poetry best helps us get a grip on the slipperiness of language. And literature leads people to have more self-confidence, not rashness, more understanding of moral and other experience."

Graham Martin
Open University

"People need to be encouraged. The trade unions should so something about this - it's a weak point of our movement. The unions shouldn't be happy that most people read rubbish. We care about the quality of life. But it shouldn't just be inside the unions. It's about the whole environment we live in. It's an international matter. It's different in Europe."

David Buckle
Regional Officer, TGWU - now active in Better Government

"I never really used the library until I was in my forties. Then a friend offered to show me how you choose a book. I started with the S's and borrowed a Steinbeck novel. Then I tried the D's and read **Robinson Crusoe**. That was wonderful. It made me realise that everybody feels alone. And that started me off understanding about community."

A mature student, former factory worker

"I accept invitations whenever I can manage it to read my poetry in public. Last year I read at the Hay-on-Wye Literature Festival. Partly I do it to show that a committed trade unionist is no less committed because he reads and writes poetry. A lot of trade unionists think it isn't macho to do that sort of thing. You've got to show you know it can be an important part of being human."

Norman Willis
Retired General Secretary, Trade Union Congress

From : Vi Hughes, *Access to Literature*, available from the Arts Council

Activities

Activity 1 Two Poems

lament for my grandmother on the day of the winter solstice by Michèle Roberts and *Simple Poem* by Carol Rumens.

FIRST READINGS

☐ Ask a volunteer to read the poem *lament for my grandmother* aloud.

☐ Now everyone read the poem silently to themselves, marking any lines or words that seem puzzling, interesting or unusual.

☐ Individually, write a few lines about what you think the poem is about after these initial readings.

Allow approximately *10 minutes* for this.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

☐ Divide into smaller groups and discuss the poem in more detail. Use the questions below as guidelines.

Verse 1	How does the poet describe the woman in this verse? Why do you think the poet uses the image (metaphor) of 'bread'?
Verses 2 & 3	What has happened to the woman in the poem ?
Verses 4 & 5	What do we learn about 'grandmother' in these verses ?
Verse 6	How does the poet describe the death of her grandmother ? Why do you think she chooses these images ?
Verse 7	What do we learn in this verse ?

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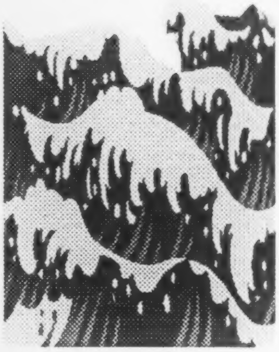
Verses 8, 9 & 10 What do these verses tell us about the poet's relationship with her grandmother ? How does she express her feelings ?

Verses 11 & 12 What is the mood of these final verses?

Look at the final verse:



'you tow me after you
you make me grow on up
and now I am one step nearer to death
and that deep sea
where you rock through the year's long night'

Why might the poet use the sea as a metaphor for death?

What is the poet saying in this verse about herself and her relationship with her grandmother?

☐ Can you see any connections between the first and last verses? The poet is describing how important her grandmother has been and how the bond between them continues to influence her life.

☐ Now look at what you wrote when you first read the poem. You can share these notes if you wish. Are they similar to how you understand the poem now you have looked more closely and discussed it?

LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE

Thinking about *how* the poem is written - its language and structure - can also enhance our understanding and responses. If this poem had been written as prose the effect would not have been as powerful.

As a group, use the following guidelines to look at the language and structure of *lament for my grandmother.*

☐ Michele Roberts has often said that food and Catholicism have been the greatest influences upon her writing. What evidence of these can you find in the poem?

☐ Think about the words Roberts uses to describe her grandmother's death and how they reflect her feelings.

☐ Pick out the words and phrases which are connected to nature. What is the effect of using these words in the poem?

☐ This poem does not rhyme but it is clearly divided into verses. What effect does this have? Do the verses match the theme of the poem? What do you think about Roberts' use of punctuation?

Finally, do you find the poem moving, enjoyable or interesting?

Allow approximately *45 minutes* for these last two sections.

Take a break?

ANOTHER POET

For the second half of the session read the other poem, *Simple Poem* by Carol Rumens and contrast it with *lament for my grandmother* in terms of the feelings, tone, language and structure.

Carol Rumens is a poet who lives in London.

☐ Select someone to read the poem *Simple Poem* aloud to the group.

☐ Now each read the poem silently to yourselves, noting any similarities and differences between this and the previous poem.

Allow *10 minutes* for this.

DISCUSSION

☐ How is the poem similar to *lament for my grandmother*?

☐ How are the feelings, tone and use of language different? Are there any similarities or differences in the structure of the two poems?

☐ Which poem do you prefer and why?

Allow approximately *30 minutes* for this.

OPTIONAL TASK

In class or at home, write a poem about someone who has meant a great deal to you and influenced your life.

Activity 2 Poem

Far and High (The first song they learnt) by Amryl Johnson

☐ Read the poem aloud

☐ Read the poem silently to yourselves

☐ What is the poem about?

DISCUSSION

- What are the contradictions in the poem?
- What is the effect of there being no punctuation?
- What is the tone of the poem?
- What is the effect of the last line?

Activity 3 How to Read a Poem

The following are suggestions for reading and discussing a poem(s) which the group has chosen but they are intended to be guidelines and you may like to think of your own questions. Try to leave a few minutes at the end of the session to summarise your discussion.

Read the poem aloud and then individually. Make notes of your initial feelings and responses to the poem - is it funny, sad, warm, gentle etc. What do you think the poem is about?

Now read the poem again slowly, marking anything that is surprising, unusual or interesting. What does the poem say to you? Does it evoke memories or associations with your own experiences?

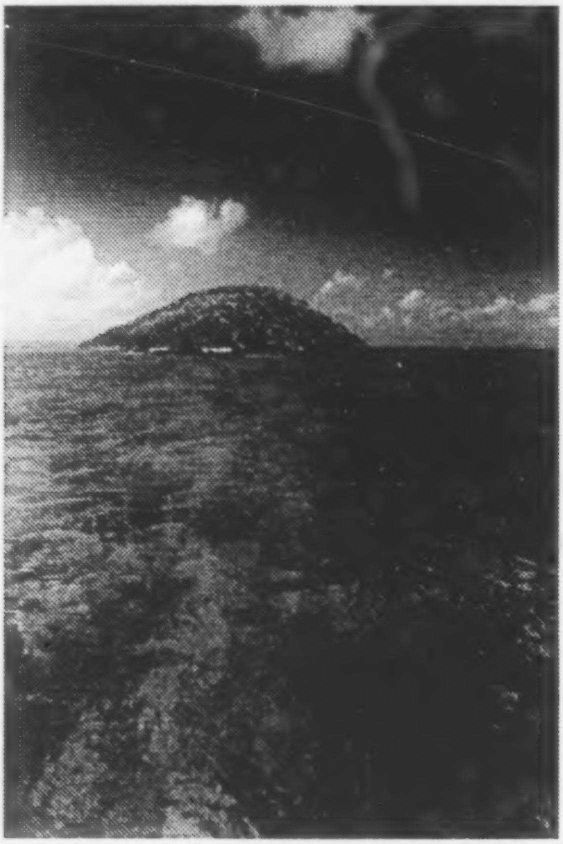
You are now ready to discuss the poem. Share your first responses, checking any words you are unsure of in a dictionary.

Then go through the poem verse by verse answering the following questions:

- What does this poem say to me?
- How does the poet get their meaning across to me?
- Which words or images are particularly important?
- What images or pictures does the poet paint?
- Does the poet use rhyme?
- Does the poet use rhythm?
- Does the structure of the poem (verse, pace, timing) enhance the meaning?

Finally, when you feel you have explored the meaning of the poem to your satisfaction think about the following:

- Do you like this poem?
- Do you think it is successful as a poem (i.e. do you think the poet succeeded in putting across what they intended?)
- Does the poem remind you of your own experiences?
- How does the choice of words, images and rhythm contribute to the meaning?
- Do you think the poem is complete or can you think of ways of altering it which would improve it? If so, try these out and see if it conveys the same meaning. You might like to discuss Margaret Atwood's poem, *Siren Song* now (activity 7).



Activity 4 **How to Read a Story**

PREPARATION

You will need plenty of notice if you are going to discuss a short story or novel. Think about supplies as you will need photocopies of short stories and an advance order to the library or bookshop for novels.

DISCUSSION

The following questions are ideas for a discussion of the story the group has chosen.

The Plot	What is happening in the story?
The Tone	What is the tone of the story? Is it funny, sad, bitter, joyful, ghostly, sinister, sardonic, bleak etc.
The Setting	Where is the story set? Is this important and in what way? How does the author convey the atmosphere of the place?
	Who is telling the story?
The Characters	Who are the main characters?
	What are they like and how does the author describe them? (What do they do, say, sound like, look like?)
	What is their relationship to each other? How do we know this? What do they feel about each other? What are their opinions on the age, gender, class, race and religion of the other characters?
	How does the author want us to view them? Sympathetically or not, and how does the author achieve this response?
	Do our sympathies change? How is this change achieved?
	What do we learn about the culture and society in which the characters live?

The Structure	Is there a crisis point or twist in the story?
	What changes occur after this point?
	How do the characters and their relationships change?
Your View	Do you like the story? Why?
	Do you think this is a successful story?

OPTIONAL TASKS

☐ Continue writing the story - how would you like the story to develop?

☐ Re-write the story from another character's point of view - how does this change the story?

☐ Imagine these characters in another setting - how would they cope?

☐ Read the extract from *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys. This novel imagines the life of Bertha Mason, the 'mad' wife of Mr. Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*. Discuss the extract and, if you have time, read some of *Jane Eyre*. How successful do you feel Rhys is in making us think about Mr. Rochester and Bertha Mason in a new light?

Activity 5 A Short Story

Read the story, *Happy Birthday* by Toni Cade Bambara, **before you come into the session**. Discuss it using the guidelines in Activity 4, perhaps dividing into small groups for part of the time.

Activity 6 Poetry from Africa

This activity looks at four poems from Africa.

☐ Select a volunteer to read the poems, *Africa, The Future is for Tomorrow, For Who Remains Standing* and *You Who Occupy Our Land.*

☐ Then, individually read all four poems silently to yourselves.

☐ As a group, talk about your initial reactions to the poems.

- What are the poets describing?
- What impressions of Africa do they convey?
- What is the mood of the poems? Are they sad, happy, hopeful, resigned, bitter, angry, ironic, cynical?
- How do the poets feel about their country and the people who live there?

☐ After reading the poems, how do you feel about Africa and the poets' experiences?

Take a break?

Divide into pairs or small groups of 3-4 people and each group look at one of the poems in detail.

☐ Look first at the *meaning* of the poem. Then think about the effect the poem gives and how this is achieved. In particular, consider:

- the ideas
- the imagery or pictures painted
- the language
- the structure or pattern of the language
- special effects, such as repetition

☐ Each group should then give a short presentation to the whole group about the poem they have discussed.

CONCLUSION

As a group, talk about whether you have enjoyed reading the poems. Did you find them thought provoking?

FOLLOW-UP

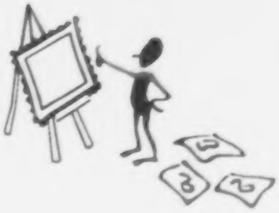
If you would like to read more South African authors, you might like to try some of the following, mostly available in paperback or from your library:

J.M. Coetzee (*Waiting for the Barbarians; Life and Times of Michael K.; Age of Iron*).

André Brink (*A Dry White Season; States of Emergency; Rumours of Rain; Looking on Darkness*).

Athol Fugalo (*Tsotsi*).

Nadine Gordimer (many novels and short stories, including *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*).



Activity 7 **Imagery and Meaning**

Siren Song by Margaret Atwood

☐ Read the poem aloud.

☐ Read the poem silently to yourselves.

☐ What is the poem about?

DISCUSSION

- Does anyone know the myth of the sirens?
- How does Atwood use the original myth?
- What is your response to the last verse?

Activity 1 handout

MICHÈLE ROBERTS

Lament for my grandmother on the day of the winter solstice

woman who cradled me, and made me rise
I am bread, you were yeast and salt in me

sometimes, my grandmother, you were busy dying
and your body became a box of bones
that travels towards the furnace to be crushed and burnt

we have surrounded a rose tree with your ashes
between turf lips you lie compressed
a word in a green tongue

when your hip smashed, fragile bone enduring whole
for almost a hundred years
you consented to darkness

you were dismayed, but you consented to death
with some struggle, and you told me:
there is no heaven, there is just us together here now

you closed your eyes and slipped off
(and I wasn't with you)
you tunnelled down through the bedclothes
prisoner of pain you dug an alley down
and then you cut loose and left me alone

most nights, you told me,
you dreamed of your dead husband
love long lost, and you complained to him:
where are you, lover? where have you gone?

my fists thunder on your breast
the bony gate to Hades and the ribbed boat
that takes your spirit there
I harrow Hell, calling out for you lost in the dark

the resurrection, the incorruptible flesh
how you doubted that, watching yourself slowly die
noting the new frailties, your body rotting
to enrich the earth

where are you now, my grandmother, white-
haired warrior, indefatigable voyager?
your pine coffin was the boat you chose to launch
and death the great water it furthered you to cross

you sailed off with just one bunch
of red and yellow flowers
you huddled in a wooden coracle
and disembarked in flames

you tow me after you
you make me grow on up
and now I am one step nearer to death
and that deep sea
where you rock through the year's long night

Activity 1 handout

CAROL RUMENS

Simple Poem

Why didn't the room say
how long your absence would be,
that night when you climbed the stairs
in your quick, expectant way
and sat across from me?
No word from the lamp or the chair
though they've both been around a bit
and ought to have guessed, not a sign
from the much-used willow plate.
It watched you laugh and eat
and did not seem to care,
as lost in desire as I
- and now you're not here.

And now you're not here, why
must there still be a room
with surfaces that mime
the slow life of the sky,
and a clock to strike off time?
Like an implacable heart
the blind swings open, shut,
on leafy blue, on grey.

Darkness refuses to stay,
and always the numb dawn light
shows a chair, raggedly turned,
and a small lamp that once burned
all through the summer night.
Oh how the light loved then
all the white length of your spine.
My pillow was dark with your hair.
Why doesn't everything die
now you're not here?

Activity 2 handout

AMRYL JOHNSON
Far and High
(The first song they learnt)

Far and high
far and high
We have set our sights up to the sky
There is no mountain we can't climb
Oh we ain't coming down
Our feet won't touch the ground

Blood or wine
blood or wine
We have drunk both grief and joy
We have drained the dregs of both
Either one caused us pain
Now, both taste the same

Love or hate
love or hate
We have chewed their jagged edges
'til they was powder in their mouths
From today our crying's done
Emotions take a back seat now

Weak or strong
weak or strong
We have danced with demons in our dreams
We have cowered from the breeze
Every battle has to be fought
Certain victory is never won

Far and high
far and high
We are climbing up the mountain side
To where the air is sweet and the eagles fly
A-n-d we ain't coming down
No, we ain't coming down

Far and high

Activity 4 handout

JEAN RHYS

Wild Sargasso Sea

So it was all over, the advance and retreat, the doubts and hesitations. Everything finished, for better or worse. There we were, sheltering from the heavy rain under a large mango tree, myself, my wife Antoinette and a little half-caste servant who was called Amélie. Under a neighbouring tree I could see our luggage covered with sacking, the two porters and a boy holding fresh horses, hired to carry us up to 2,000 feet to the waiting honeymoon house.

The girl Amélie said this morning, 'I hope you will be very happy sir, in your sweet honeymoon house.' She was laughing at me I could see. A lovely little creature but sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps, like much else in this place.

'It's only a shower,' Antoinette said anxiously. 'It will soon stop'.

I looked at the sad leaning coconut palms, the fishing boats drawn up on the shingly beach, the uneven row of whitewashed huts, and asked the name of the village.

'Massacre'.

'And who was massacred here? Slaves?'

'Oh no.' She sounded shocked. 'Not slaves. Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now.'

The rain fell more heavily, huge drops sounded like hail on the leaves of the tree, and the sea crept stealthily forwards and backwards.

So this is Massacre. Not the end of the world, only the last stage of our interminable journey from Jamaica, the start of our honeymoon. And it will look very different in the sun.

It had been arranged that we would leave Spanish Town immediately after the ceremony and spend some weeks in one of the Windward Islands, at a small estate which had belonged to Antoinette's mother. I agreed. As I had agreed to everything else.

The windows of the huts were shut, the doors opened into silence and dimness. Then three little boys came to stare at us. The smallest wore nothing but a religious medal round his neck and the brim of a large fisherman's hat. When I smiled at him, he began to cry. A woman called from one of the huts and he ran away, still howling.

The other two followed slowly, looking back several times.

As if this was a signal a second woman appeared at her door, then a third.

'It's Caro,' Antoinette said. 'I'm sure it's Caro. Caroline,' she called, waving, and the woman waved back. A gaudy old creature in a brightly flowered dress, a striped head handkerchief and gold ear-rings.

'You'll get soaked, Antoinette,' I said.

'No, the rain is stopping.' She held up the skirt of her riding habit and ran across the street. I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. And when did I begin to notice all this about my wife Antoinette? After we left Spanish Town I suppose. Or did I notice it before and refuse to admit what I saw? Not that I had much time to notice anything. I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever.

The two women stood in the doorway of the hut gesticulating, talking not English but the debased French patois they use in this island. The rain began to drip down the back of my feeling of discomfort and melancholy.

Reading for Pleasure

I thought about the letter which should have been written to England a week ago. Dear Father ...

'Caroline asks if you will shelter in her house.'

This was Antoinette. She spoke hesitatingly as if she expected me to refuse, so it was easy to do so.

'But you are getting wet,' she said.

'I don't mind that.' I smiled at Caroline and shook my head.

'She will be very disappointed,' said my wife, crossed the street again and went into the dark hut.

Amélie, who had been sitting with her back to us, turned round. Her expression was so full of delighted malice, so intelligent, above all so intimate that I felt ashamed and looked away.

'Well,' I thought, 'I have had fever. I am not myself yet.'

The rain was not so heavy and I went to talk to the porters. The first man was not a native of the island. 'This is a very wild place – not civilised. Why you come here?' He was called the Young Bull he told me, and he was twenty-seven years of age. A magnificent body and a foolish conceited face. The other man's name was Emile, yes, he was born in the village, he lived there. 'Ask him how old he is,' suggested the Young Bull. Emile said in a questioning voice, 'Fourteen? Yes I have fourteen years master.'

'Impossible,' I said. I could see the grey hairs in his sparse beard.

'Fifty-six years perhaps.' He seemed anxious to please.

The Young Bull laughed loudly. 'He don't know how old he is, he don't think about it. I tell you sir these people are not civilised.'

Emile muttered, 'My mother she know, but she dead.'

Then he produced a blue rag which twisted into a pad and put on his head.

Most of the women were outside their doors looking at us but without smiling. Sombre people in a sombre place. Some of the men were going to their boats. When Emile shouted, two of them came towards him. He sang in a deep voice. They answered, then lifted the heavy wicker basket and swung it on to his head-pad singing. He tested the balance with one hand and strode off, barefooted on the sharp stones, by far the gayest member of the wedding party. As the Young Bull was loaded up he glanced at me sideways boastfully and he too sang to himself in English.

The boy brought the horses to a large stone and I saw Antoinette coming from the hut. The sun blazed out and steam rose from the green behind us. Amélie took her shoes off, tied them together and hung them round her neck. She balanced her small basket on her head and swung away as easily as the porters. We mounted, turned a corner and the village was out of sight. A cock crowed loudly and I remembered the night before which we had spent in the town. Antoinette had a room to herself, she was exhausted. I lay awake listening to cocks crowing all night, then got up very early and saw the women with trays covered with white cloths on their heads going to the kitchen. The woman with small hot loaves for sale, the woman with cakes, the woman with sweets. In the street another called *Bon sirop, bon sirop*, and I felt peaceful.

Jean Rhys was born in Dominica in 1894 and came to England when she was sixteen. After her father died she drifted into a series of jobs - chorus girl, mannequin, artists' model - and only began to write when the first of her three marriages broke up. She wrote about women as underdogs, exploited for and exploiting their sexuality. This extract is from *Wide Sargasso Sea* published by Penguin Books, 1968.

Activity 5 handout

TONI CADE BAMBARA
Happy Birthday

Ollie spent the whole morning waiting. First she tried shaking Granddaddy Larkins, who just wouldn't wake up. She thought he was just playing, but he was out. His teeth weren't even in the glass, and there was a bottle on the bedstand. He'd be asleep for days. Then she waited on the cellar steps for Chalky, the building superintendent, to get through hauling garbage and come talk. But he was too busy. And then Ollie sat on the stairs waiting for Wilma. But it was Saturday and Wilma'd be holed up somewhere stuffing herself with potato chips and crunching down on jaw breakers, too greedy to cool it and eat 'em slow. Wilma'd come by tomorrow, though, and lie her behind off. "I went to Bear Mountain yesterday on a big boat with my brother Chestnut and his wife," she'd say, "and that's why I didn't come by for you cause we left so early in the morning that my mother even had to get me up when it was still dark out and we had a great time and I shot bows and arrows when we got there, and do you like my new dress?" Wilma always had some jive tale and always in one breath.

Ollie tried to figure out why she was even friends with Wilma. Wilma was going to grow up to be lady and marry a doctor and live in New York, Wilma's mother said. But Ollie, poor orphan, was going to grow up and marry a drinking man if she didn't get killed first, Wilma's mother said. Ollie never told Granddaddy Larkins what Wilma's mother was all the time saying. She just hated her in private.

Ollie spent the early afternoon sitting on the rail in front of the Chicken Shack Restaurant, watching the cooks sling the wire baskets of chicken in and out of the frying fat. They were too sweaty and tired to tell her to move from in front. "Ruining the business", the owner used to fuss. Later she stood between the laundry and shoe store, watching some men pitch pennies against the building. She waited for a while, squeezing a rubber ball in her hand. If I can just get the wall for a minute, she thought, maybe somebody'll come along and we'll have us a good game of handball. But the men went right on pitching while other ones were waiting their turn. They'd be there for hours, so Ollie left.

She knocked on Mrs. Robinson's door to see if she wanted her dog walked. It was cool in the hallway at least. No one was home, not even the loud-mouth dog that usually slammed itself against the door like he was big and bad instead of being just a sorry little mutt. Then Ollie took the stairs two at a time, swinging up past the fourth floor to the roof. There was rice all over. Ronnie must have already fed his pigeons. The door to the roof was unlocked, and that meant that the big boys were on the roof. She planted her behind against the door and pushed. She kicked at a cluster of rice. Some grains bounced onto the soft tar of the roof and sank. When Ollie moved onto the roof, the blinding sun made her squint. And there they were, the big boys, jammed between the skylight and the chimney like dummies in a window, just doing nothing and looking half-asleep.

Peter Proper, as always, was dressed to the teeth. "I naturally stays clean," he was always saying. Today he said nothing, just sitting. Marbles, a kid from the projects, had an open book on his knees. James was there, too, staring at a fingernail. And Ferman, the nut from crosstown, and Frenchie, the athlete. A flurry of cinders floated down from the chimney and settled into their hair like gray snow.

"Why don't you just sit in the incinerator? You can get even dirtier that way." Ollie yelled. No one moved or said anything. She expected Frenchie to at least say, "Here comes Miss Freshmouth," or for Peter to send her to the store for eighteen cents' worth of American cheese. It was always eighteen cents' worth, and he always handed her a quarter and a nickel. Big Time. "Don't none of you want nothing from the store today?" She squinted with her hands on her hips, waiting for the store dummies to start acting like Marbles, Peter, James and so forth.

Ferman straightened out a leg against the skylight. "Ollie, when are you going to learn how to play with dolls?"

"Ya want anything from the store, Ferman Fruitcake? I'm too big for dolls." Ollie hitched up her jeans.

Ferman started to say something, but his audience was nearly asleep. Frenchie's head was nodding, James was staring into space. The pages of the open book on Marbles' knees were turning backward, three at a time, by themselves. Peter Proper was sitting very straight, back against the chimney with his eyes closed to the sun.

Ollie turned, looking over the edge of the roof. There was no one down in the park today. There was hardly anyone on the block. She propped a sticky foot against the roof railing and scraped off the tar. Everything below was gray as if the chimney had snowed on the whole block.

Chalky, the superintendent, was rolling a mattress onto a cart. Maybe he'd play cards with her. Just last Friday he had, but sometimes he wouldn't even remember her and would run and hide thinking she was King Kong come down just to hit him on the head or something. Ollie looked past the swings to the track. Empty. Frenchie should be out there trotting, she thought, looking back at him. He was dipping his head. Sometimes she'd trot beside Frenchie, taking big jumps to keep up. He'd smile at her but never teased her about them silly little jumps. He'd tell her for the hundredth time how he was going to enter the Olympics and walk off with a cup full of money.

"Go away, little girl"!" Ferman had just yelled at her as if he had forgotten her name or didn't know her any more. He's as crazy as Chalky, thought Ollie, slamming the big roof door behind her and running down the stairs to the street. They must be brothers.

It was now four o'clock by the bank clock. Ollie remembered the bar-b-que place that had burned down. But she'd already rummaged through the ruins and found nothing. No use messing up her sneakers any further. She turned around to look the block over. Empty. Everyone was either at camp or at work or was sleeping like the boys on the roof or dead or just plain gone off. She could almost see into the high windows of Mount Zion A.M.E. Church. "This time I'm going to fly off and kill myself," she yelled, flapping her arms. A lady with bundles turned the corner and gave Ollie a look, crossed against the traffic, looking over her shoulder and shaking her head at what she kids of today had come to. Reverend Hall came out of the church basement, mopping his head with a big handkerchief.

"You go play somewhere else," he said, frowning into the sun.

"Where?" Ollie asked.

"Well, go to the park and play."

"With who?" she demanded. "I've got nobody to play with."

Reverend Hall just stood there trying to control his temper. He was always chasing the kids. That's why he's got no choir, Granddaddy Larkins was always saying. He always chases kids and dogs and pigeons and drunks.

"Little girl, you can't act up here in front of the church. Have you no – "

"How come you always calling me little girl, but you sure know my name when I'm walking with my grandfather?" Ollie said.

"Tell'm all about his sanctified self," said Miss Hazel, laughing out her window. But when the Reverend looked up to scowl, she ducked back in. He marched back into the church, shooing the pigeons off the steps.

"Wish me happy birthday," Ollie whispered to the pigeons. They hurried off toward the curb. "Better wish me happy birthday," she yelled, "or somebody around here is gonna get wasted."

Miss Hazel leaned out the window again. "What's with you, Ollie? You sick or something?"

"You should never have a birthday in the summertime," Ollie yelled, "cause nobody's around to wish you happy birthday or give you a party."

"Well, don't cry, sugar. When you get as old as me, you'll be glad to forget all about –"

"I'm not crying." Ollie stamped her foot, but the tears kept coming and before she could stop herself she was howling, right there in the middle of the street and not even caring who saw her. And she howled so loudly that even Miss Hazel's great-grandmother had to come to the window to see who was dying and with so much noise and on such a lovely day.

"What's the matter with the Larkins child?" asked the old woman.

"Beats me." Miss Hazel shook her head and watched Ollie for a minute. "I don't understand kids sometimes," she sighed, and closed the window so she could hear the television good.

Toni Cade Bambara is a black woman writer born and brought up in Harlem, New York, the setting of many of her stories. She talks about her writing as concerned to break with past restraints of language, 'trying to break words open and get at the bones'. 'Happy Birthday' is taken from Toni Cade Bambara, *Gorilla, My Love*, Women's Press Ltd., 1984.

Activity 6 handout

MARIA MANUELA MARGARIDO

You Who Occupy our Land

Do not lose sight
of the skipping children:
The black khaki garbed snake
struts before the hut door.
The breadfruit trees they cut down
to leave us hungry.
The roads they watch
for fleeing cacao.
Tragedy we already know:
the flaming hut
firing up the palm-thatched roof,
the smoke smell
mixing into the smell of
guando fruit and death.
We know ourselves,
sorters of tea from hampers
bark-strippers of the cashew trees.
But you, faintly off-colour
masks of men
barely empty ghosts of men
you who occupy our land?

Translated from the Portuguese by Allan Francovich.

Activity 6 handout

ANDRÉE CHEDID

Who Remains Standing?

First,
erase your name,
unravel your years,
destroy your surroundings,
uproot what you seem,
and who remains standing?
Then,
rewrite your name,
restore your age,
rebuild your house,
pursue your path,
and then,
endlessly,
start over, all over again.

Translated from the French by Samuel Hazo and Mirène Ghossein.

Activity 6 handout

ANNA GRÉCKI

The Future is for Tomorrow

The future is for tomorrow
The future is soon

Beyond the walls closed like clenched fists
Through the bars encircling the sun
Our thoughts are vertical and our hopes
The future coiled in the heart climbs towards the sky
Like upraised arms in a sign of farewell
Arms upright, rooted in the light
In a sign of an appeal to love
To return to my life
I press you against my breast my sister
Builder of liberty and tenderness
And I say to you await tomorrow
For we know

The future is soon
The future is for tomorrow.

Translated from the French by Mildred P. Mortimer.

Activity 6 handout

DAVID DIOP

Africa

Africa my Africa
Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs
Africa of whom my grandmother sings
On the banks of the distant river
I have never known you
But your blood flows in my veins
Your beautiful black blood that irrigates the fields
The blood of your sweat
The sweat of your work
The work of your slavery
The slavery of your children
Africa tell me Africa
Is this your back that is bent
This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation
This back trembling with red scars
And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun
But a grave voice answer me
Impetuous child that tree young and strong
That tree over there
Splendidly alone amidst white and faded flowers
That is your Africa springing up anew
Springing up patiently obstinately
Whose fruits bit by bit acquire
The bitter taste of liberty.

Activity 7 handout

MARGARET ATWOOD

Siren Song

This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song
that is irresistible:

the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows
because anyone who has heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?

I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time.

11

REMINISCENCE

Recalling past experiences can be an enjoyable activity that helps a group of people get to know and value each other, become more expressive, and recognise the talents, capacities and strengths that people have.

Guidance for Group Leaders

Focus on one area at a time, for then the memories become clearer and more vivid as one person's memories spark off another's.

It is important to ensure that everyone has a chance to talk. This can be done by getting into pairs to start with and then by taking it in turns round the group.

On the whole it is important to share the time fairly equally but also for no-one to feel pressured to speak if they don't want to.

Once you have started to remember, asking detailed questions like

'Who else was there?'

or

'Can you remember the colour of the dress you were wearing?'

often helps a person to recall more.

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WARM-UP

If it is a new group, choose a warm-up which helps people get to know each other's names.

☐ Go round saying your name, where you were born and who was in your family.

ACTIVITIES

The Activities give you several ideas for sessions, and you will probably also have some ideas of your own. Concentrate on one or two topics per session and the memories will be richer.

There are several ways of starting and you can mix the topics and methods as you wish.

PREPARATION

Choose the Activity you want to use before the session and bring along any objects suggested as an aid to remembering. A cassette or tape-recorder might be useful for some of the sessions.

FOLLOW-UP

Reminiscence sessions can lead to other activities like writing, making an exhibition of quotations from the session accompanied by photographs or objects, or building memory boxes. Local primary schools or libraries are often keen to display these. They could also form the basis for a play or production by the group themselves or by a local drama group.

Alternatively the session may arouse interest in having a talk or planning a visit to, say, a school or a local history museum.

RESOURCES

- A useful resource is *Lifetimes*, photographs and books of ideas available from **Age Exchange**, 11 Blackheath Village, London SE3, **telephone** 0208 318 9105. Age Exchange also runs good training days.

- The **local museum** service often lends boxes of old objects grouped around different themes. You could use these as a starting-point.

- The **public library** will have a section on autobiography: read about other people's memories and lives.

Activities

Activity 1 . Bringing Back Memories

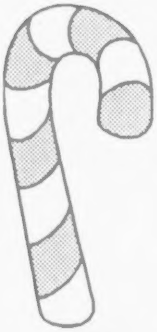
Everyone bring to the session an object which brings back memories for them and which they wouldn't mind sharing with others.

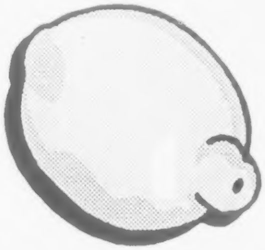
☐ Each person take it in turn to talk about their object, describing it and the memories attached to it. Others then add any memories of their own the object brings back.

Old photographs could be used in the same way.

☐ Take in some '**smells**' - cloves, lemons, old-fashioned sweets, medicines, etc. Pass them round the group one at a time and talk about any memories they arouse.

☐ Look at some **old pictures of you locality** (your central library will have local history books or even a special collection of old photographs). Have things changed? For the better or the worse?





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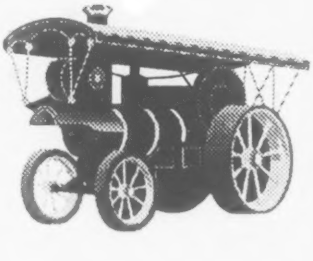

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Activity 2 Outings

STARTING-POINT

Start with a **guided reflection**: sit comfortably, close your eyes and relax while one person (volunteer) talks through a scene with questions that may stir memories.

Volunteer: speak slowly and calmly, leaving plenty of time for people to recollect their own experiences after each prompt.

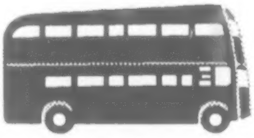
Think back to a time when you were a child and you were getting ready to go on an outing or a holiday.

You've been looking forward to it and now you're actually going.

How are you feeling?
What are you wearing?
What are you taking with you?
Who else is there?
What are they doing?

Now you are on your way.

How are you travelling?
Foot? Bike? Car? Bus? Train?
What can you see?
Where are you going?
What are you looking forward to?



Now imagine you have arrived there.

What can you see associated with this place?
What can you smell?
What can you hear?
What can you taste?
What can you feel and touch?

Slowly open your eyes and come back to the present when you are ready.

DISCUSSION

As a whole group briefly discuss how you enjoyed the experience of being talked through a reflection on the past. Did it help to bring back memories?

Share some of the memories. Prompt each other with questions like:

- What were the best things about the outing or holiday you remembered?
- What were the worst things?
- What did you eat?
- What did you wear?
- Did you play any games or watch any entertainments?
- How much did the outing cost? Who paid? How as it paid for?
- How did you get home and what was the journey like?

FOLLOW-UP

☐ The memories re-awakened by this session could lead to some **personal writing** on holidays or outings.

☐ If anyone is willing a **large picture** composed of all the memories could be drawn while people are talking.

☐ A simple **display** could be made by having a map in the middle with wool or string leading from where the holiday took place to a photograph of the holiday or of the person now, a name caption, and a piece of writing or brief quotation from each person recalling the best/funniest/worst thing about the holiday.

Activity 3 **Do You Remember?**

Choose to concentrate on a particular time or topic in this Activity, for example:

Childhood friends and childhood games (see Activity 4)
Schooldays
Festivals
Outings and holidays
Illness
Shops and shopping
Love
Work
War

☐ You might choose to recall your memories in pairs first. It is usually easier to talk to one other person and this makes sure everyone has a good chance to talk. Prompt each other with questions like:

'Who else was there?'
'What did he/she look like? Wear? Do? Say?'
'Can you remember what the room looked like?'
'What happened next?'

Spend about *10 minutes* on this.

☐ Ask people to feed back to the whole group the sort of things they remembered.

☐ Extend discussion on the topic in the whole group. If it dries up you could ask '*Does anyone remember anything like this?*' or move the discussion on with a prompting question.

Allow about *1 hour* for all this.

TAKE A BREAK?

After the break the group might like to:

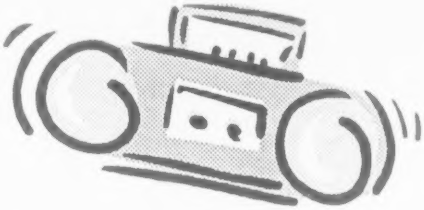
☐ Choose another topic.

Or

☐ Have each person retell the memory of their (or the group's choice) on to a tape or cassette recorder and listen to it together.

Or

☐ Discuss in what ways life is different now, what is better and what worse.



Activity 4 Childhood Games and Childhood Friends

In pairs

☐ Tell each other about some of the things you liked playing best when you were a child and who you played with.

Or

☐ Do you remember a special toy or game which meant a lot to you?

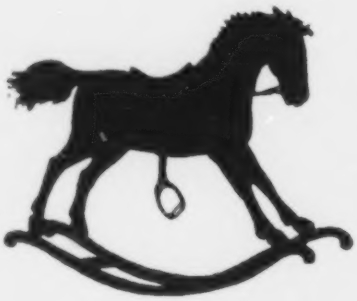
Allow *5-10 minutes* for this.

Whole group

What sort of things were people remembering? Encourage recall by prompting with questions about:

- Toys ... any favourites? How many?
- Where did you play?
- Differences between town and country?
- What were your favourite places to play in? What did you do there?
- Who did you play with?
- Did boys play with girls? What games? Up to what age?
- Any regional/cultural differences?

You could finish this session by reading a passage from an autobiography. There will be a selection in your local library.



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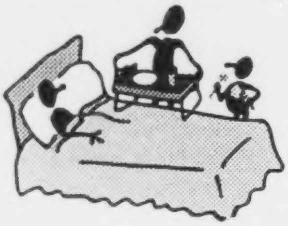
Activity 5 Illness



This session could be used as a preliminary to the section on **Health** (p. 119).

STARTING-POINT

☐ Each person bring in a small selection of **old-fashioned remedies** or medicines - oil of peppermint, oil of cloves, onion, cough mixture, Friars Balsam, cough sweets, etc.

☐ Pass them round one at a time and ask what memories they bring back. What were they used for? What home remedies were used in your family and are there any you still swear by?

DISCUSSION

Home remedies were much relied on before the advent of modern medicine and the National Health Service (NHS). As a group, think about what else was different before the NHS, using the following questions as guidelines:

- Does anyone remember a time before the NHS when someone in the family needed a doctor? What happened? How much was the charge?
- Did any families belong to private insurance schemes before the NHS?
- What happened if people needed to go to hospital?
- What happened when someone had a baby?
- What about quarantine?
- Which diseases were most dreaded?

Allow about*45 minutes to 1 hour* for all this.

TAKE A BREAK?

After a break the discussion could be brought into the present:

- What, if anything, do you remember about the introduction of the NHS?
- What difference did it make to you and your family?
- How do you look after yourselves now (diet, exercise, etc.)?
- What medical services do you use?
- What is your experience of these services? Is there any way you would like to see them improved?
- What do you know about and think of alternative medicines (homeopathy, acupuncture, aromatherapy, reflexology, etc.)?

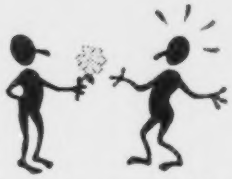
FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up sessions could include:

☐ A talk.

☐ A self-help session using a First Aid book to answer questions round the group.

☐ Asking someone to come and teach some simple hand and foot massage techniques.



Activity 6 **Dances and Courtship**

Remembering going to dances and all the rituals involved in courtship can make for a very enjoyable session.

☐ Try remembering and describing in detail what you wore, hairstyles, make up.

☐ What was and was not allowed or approved of?

☐ Where did you go?

☐ Remember the tunes you danced to. The brave can try humming or singing them or you could bring some tapes or CDs to play.

☐ What dances were popular?

☐ How do the ways in which young people get to know each other now compare with your own past experiences?

☐ Do you think the young have more or less fun? more or less freedom than you had?

Activity 7 **From Child to Adult**

This Activity is about comparing memories by looking at a poem from South Africa, *For My Brothers (Mandla and Bheki) in Exile*, by Ben J. Langa.

This session could be combined with one from the **Reading for Pleasure** section, **How to Read a Poem**.

- ☐ Someone volunteer to read the poem out loud to the group.
- ☐ Then everyone separately spend about *10 minutes* reading the poem silently.

GROUP DISCUSSION

- What is the poem about?
  - Why is the author thinking about his childhood?
  - How does it contrast with the present day?
  - Why is his mother sad?
  - What particularly about the brothers' early years influences their adult lives?
- What does the poem tell us about South Africa?
- Are the author's childhood experiences very different from your own? What about his present circumstances compared to yours?

COMPARISONS

- ☐ Each person write a short piece (either poetry, prose, or just notes) contrasting their childhood and their adulthood (*about 20 minutes*)
- ☐ Each person in turn read out what they have written to the whole group. Are there similarities in your experiences of childhood? And of adulthood? How much do members of the group think external circumstances (as in South Africa) influence the development of child into adult? Does the group agree with the idea that 'The child is father of the man' (William Wordsworth)?

FOLLOW-UP

There might be someone in your group - or you could invite an outside speaker - who would talk to the group in more detail about experiences of childhood in a different country or a different culture.

Reminiscence

BEN J. LANGA

For My Brothers (Mandla and Bheki) in Exile

You have seen part of the world
Met some very nice people
Experienced the hardships of fresh air
Longed for the warm home-fires
Around which we sat on winter night
Listening to pa tell us stories
Or reading passages from the Bible.
Those were the days, my brother Mandla,
Some days they were, my brother Bheki.
Do you remember those days?
When we were young and happy together
Playing cops and robbers, hide and seek,
Pinching bottoms whilst in hiding -
Young and happy together?
One day it would rain
And before the night was out
We'd be carrying brooms, sacks and buckets,
Urging the water out of our house.
You do remember those days?

Maybe I do not know who you are.
You left in the stealth of the night
Maybe hiked miles in fear but determined
To finally reach new worlds unknown.
Some days I happen to clean house
Exploring every nook and cranny.
I find here and there memories of our youth
Written on scraps of black and white photos.
I shake my head in pain of loss,
Say to myself, 'Gone are those days.'

The old woman is still around, brothers,
Heavy creases run down her mahogany face;
They are dry rivulets opened by heavy rains of pain.
At night, alone in the vaults of darkness,
She prays. In her prayer she talks about you.
Mama cries at night - by day she laughs,
Tending sisters' small children.
I know she longs to catch but one glimpse
Of her flesh and blood. Of her own womb.
Sometimes she talks about it.
Swallowing lumps, hiding tears behind eyes.
Mama is strong. Very tough. She was carved in teak.
In the evenings when we're together.
Then she goes to sleep.

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Reminiscence

On Xmas Day mama makes custard and jelly,
Reminds us of how we all looked forward to Xmas
Because that was about the only day
We have tasted custard and jelly.
Big bowls of jelly would be made
Then taken to the kindly butcher
(Remember, we didn't have a fridge).
Some time before our big meal
She'd send one of us to collect the bowls.
I remember we would handle those bowls gingerly
As though our whole life depended on them.

I do not know, maybe, what you're doing out there.
I know you're alive, yet longing for the home country.
You loved this country deeply,
So much that you could leave only to come back
When it has gained more sense.
Our neighbours (the ones you knew so well) are still there.
We meet at the tap (it's still outside) and chat.
They ask about you. They care about you.
Those days you do remember.
In all our pain and agony we rejoice,
For the tensile strength of our souls
Transcends border and boundaries.
However far apart our bodies may be
Our souls are locked together in a perpetual embrace.

From *A Land Apart: A South African Reader*, ed. André Briuk and J.M. Coetzee, Faber and Faber, 1986

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Age Concern
60 Pitcairn Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3LL

Age Concern England
Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4EJ
Telephone 0208 679 8000

Age Concern Training
Martindale, Hawks Green Lane, Cannock WS1 2XN
Telephone 01543 503660 Fax 01543 504640

Alzheimer's Disease Society
Gordon House, 10 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PH
Telephone 0207 306 0606 Fax 0207 306 0808

Anchor Housing Association
Fountain Court, Oxford Spires Business Park, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1NZ
Telephone 01865 854000 Fax 01865 854001

Arthritis Care
18 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD
Telephone 0207 916 1500 Fax 0207 916 1505

Arthritis and Rheumatism Council
41 Eagle Street, London WC1R 4AR
Telephone 0207 905 8572

The Arts Council of England
14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ
Telephone 0207 333 0100 Fax 0207 973 6590

Association of District Councils
26 Chapter Street, London SW1P 4ND
Telephone 0207 233 6868 Fax 0207 233 6551

Association of Metropolitan Authorities
35 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BJ
Telephone 0207 222 8100

Beth Johnson Foundation
Parkfield House, 64 Princess Rd., Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 7JL
Telephone 01782 844036

Useful Addresses

Better Government for Older People
Development Centre, Coxwell Avenue, Wolverhampton Science Park, Wolverhampton WV10 9RT
Telephone 01902 824252 Fax 01902 824266

British Medical Association
BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP
Telephone 0207 387 4499

British Tinnitus Association
14-18 West Barr Green, Sheffield S1 2DA
Telephone 0114 279 6600

Carers National Association
20/25 Glasshouse Yard, London EC1A 4JS
Telephone 0207 490 8818 Fax 0207 490 8824

Centre for Policy on Ageing
25-31 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP
Telephone 0207 253 1787

Chest, Heart and Stroke Association
CHSA House, Whitecross Street, London EC1Y
Telephone 0207 490 7999

Child Poverty Action Group
4th Floor, 1-5 Bath Street, London EC1V 9PY
Telephone 0207 253 3406

Commission for Racial Equality
Elliot House, 10-12 Allington Street, London SW1E 5EH

Community Development Foundation
60 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AG
Telephone 0207 226 5375 Fax 0207 704 0313

Community Education
Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

Confederation of British Industry
Centre Point, 103 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DU
Telephone 0207 379 7400

CRUSE
Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UR
Telephone 0208 940 4818

Useful Addresses

Disability Alliance
1st Floor East, Universal House, 88-94 Wentworth St., London E1 7SA
Telephone 0207 247 8776 Fax 0207 247 8765

Equal Opportunities Commission
Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester M3 3HN
Telephone 0161 833 9244

Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers (FWWCP)
PO Box 540, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6DR
Telephone 01782 822327

Health Education Authority
Resource Centre, 78 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1AH

Help the Aged
St. James Walk, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0BE

King's Fund Informal Caring Support Unit
King's Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NP

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS)
3rd Floor, Arundel Court, 177 Arundel St., Sheffield S1 2NU
Telephone 0114 278 6636

National Association for Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA)
238a Gloucester Terrace, London W2 6HU
Telephone 0207 243 0601

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
21 De Montfort St., Leicester LE1 7GE
Telephone 0116 2551451

National Music and Disability Information Service
c/o Sound Sense, Riverside House, Rattlesden, Bury St Edmunds IP30 0SF
Telephone 01449 736287 Fax 01449 737649

National Osteoporosis Society
Barton Meade House, PO Box 10, Radstock, Bath BA3 3YB

Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys
St. Catherine's House, 10 Kingsway, London WC2B 6JP
Telephone 0207 242 0262

Useful Addresses

The Open College of the Arts (OCA)
Houndhill, Worsborough, Barnsley S70 6TU
Telephone 01226 730495

The Open University (OU)
PO Box 200, Milton Keynes MK7 6YZ
Telephone 01908 653231

Parkinson's Disease Society
36 Portland Place, London W1N 3DG

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA
Telephone 0207 388 1266

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
Tate House, 28 Wetherby Road, Harrogate HG2 7SA
Telephone 01423 881249 Fax 01423 885192

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)
105 Gower Street, London WC1E 6AH
Telephone 0207 387 8033

RSVP Newslines, SCV Retired and Senior Voluntary Programme
237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NJ

Trades Union Congress
Congress House, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

UNISON
1 Mabledon Place, London WC1 9AJ
Telephone 0207 338 2366 Fax 0207 387 6692

University of the Third Age (U3A)
26 Harrison St., London WC1H 8JG
Telephone 0207 837 8838

Voluntary Arts Network
PO Box 200, Cardiff CF5 1YH
Telephone 01222 395395 Fax 01222 397397

Workers Education Association (WEA)
Temple House, 17 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PB
Telephone 0208 983 1515

EDUCATION AND AGEING
SOME USEFUL EUROPEAN CONTACTS

European Commission

DG V/2 Information and publications
Information Centre
200 rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200
B - 1049 Brussels
Belgium

Tel: 00 322 295 4988
Fax: 00 322 296 2393

Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs

UKRep

6 Rond point Robert Schuman
B-1040 Brussels
Belgium

Tel: 00 322 287 8211

UKRep (the Permanent Representation to the European Union) is essentially the Brussels arm of the Government Departments in Whitehall and elsewhere. The main job of its staff is to represent the UK in day-to-day negotiations. They are in close and regular contact with the Commission, the European Parliament and other EU Institutions, the Council Secretariat and the Permanent Representations of the other Member States. UKRep staff can offer up-to-date advice on, for example, opportunities available to British businessmen under particular EC programmes; current Commission activities; and the progress of specific Commission proposals in the Council decision-making process.

That said, the first port of call for many businessmen or other enquirers will not be UKRep, but the relevant Whitehall Department (especially if it is a question of getting a general steer on UK policy, or wanting to make an input to the decision-making process in the UK).

Older Women's Network

Ms. Sulamite Perer
Older Women's Network
Membre du Comite de Direction
24 Avenue des Jardinets
B-1170 Bruxelles
Belgium

Tel: 00 322 672 7545
Fax: 00 322 229 3820

European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)

Mr. David Hudson
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
UK Executive Committee Member
Bondway House 3
British Refuge Council
London SW8 1SJ

Tel: 0207 820 3106
Fax: 0207 820 3107

The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

The European Association for the Education of Adults - European Bureau of Adult Education (EAEA-EBAE) is a Europe-wide association made up of non-governmental organisations actively involved in the development of adult education (AE). Founded in 1953 by representatives from a number of European countries, it has today representation from 180 organisations operating in 25 countries - from Cyprus to the Scandinavian countries, and from Latvia to Portugal. The activities of the EAEA-EBAE are determined by the needs and resources of its members and operates in conjunction with national and regional governments (more precisely with the governments of The Netherlands, Catalonia and Flanders) and with international organisations such as UNESCO, the EEC, the Council of Europe, the European Foundation for Culture, the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), etc.

Information and Documentation Office
Museokatu 18 A 9
00100 Helsinki 10
Finland

Tel: 00 358 044 9980
00 358 044 1794

Eurolink Age

Eurolink Age is a not-for-profit network of organisations and individuals that promotes good policy and practice on ageing in the interests of the 120 million older people in the European Union. Our members represent all aspects of ageing policy and older people's interests in all 15 EU Member States. They include older people's organisations, national social welfare NGOs, regional NGOs, local voluntary bodies, trade unions, gerontologists and other academics, MEPs and other politicians, international bodies and interested individuals.

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Appendix

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